RUSKIN THE PROPHET

AND OTHER CENTENARY STUDIES

EDITED BY

J. HOWARD WHITEHOUSE

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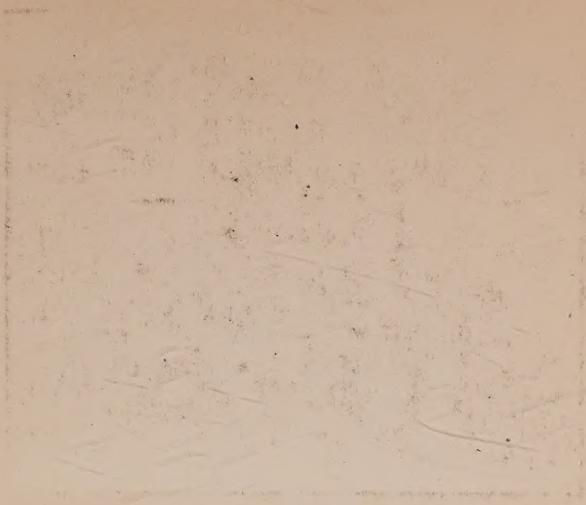

RUSKIN THE PROPHET

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BY

JOHN MASEFIELD DEAN INGE
CHARLES F. G. MASTERMAN
AND OTHERS

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J. HOWARD WHITEHOUSE

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INTRODUCTION

IN the Autumn of 1919 the centenary of Ruskin's birth was observed by an exhibition of his drawings at the Royal Academy. The exhibition followed a public meeting held earlier in the same year. The proceedings at that meeting (held on the 8th February) under the presidency of Lord Bryce have already been published. At the subsequent exhibition an attempt was made to present critical estimates of Ruskin's work and teaching, and a number of lectures, with this object, were delivered at the exhibition by representative men. The contents of this book consist for the most part of the lectures so delivered. Two exceptions are the essays by Professor Dale and Mr. J. A. Hobson. Owing to their absence from England, their contributions to these studies of Ruskin could not be given at the time of the exhibition. The other exception is Mr. Laurence Binyon's paper, which originally appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* in February 1919.

In the case of the other contributions, they are now published substantially in the form in which they were delivered as lectures. In one or two instances they were addresses given without notes, and in these cases it was thought better to print them substantially in the form in which they were delivered and to retain their more intimate form.

The reconsideration of Ruskin's views which this book

contains enables a new, and perhaps a more impartial estimate to be formed of his service to the cause of social reform. There are important reasons why latterly that service has been obscured. He began to make his appeal to the world more than three-quarters of a century ago. He then stood alone. He was repudiated and attacked by every circle and school. The Bishop repudiated his theology; the political economist his social teaching; the artist, professional and amateur, his theories on the mission of the painter. The stylist sneered at his rhetoric; the logician and the pedant at what they called his sentimentalism. Ruskin became therefore a great storm centre, each new book from his pen leading to fresh outbursts of controversy and attack.

But one vital fact soon emerged above the sea of criticism. That was the reception of his teaching by the working classes of this country. The appeal to their hearts and imagination was undoubted. They soon realized that one with sympathy for the lives they led was speaking to them, and that he wished to create for them here and now a new and happier world. He gave them new visions and the courage to try to realize them. These were days before the great modern organization of the power of the democracy. Trade Unions were undeveloped; there was no representative franchise; Labour had not entered the House of Commons. It was Ruskin who kindled a great part of the spiritual enthusiasm which was to lead the nation into many new paths.

These middle years of the last century, during which Ruskin was preaching the new social gospel, were followed right up to the outbreak of the European War by a series of political reforms and social changes of incomparable importance, and Ruskin saw in his own life-time much of his teaching

carried into effect. Many of his plans, accepted with enthusiasm by ordinary working men and women, endorsed, and expounded, and pleaded for by the new type of social worker and reformer who emerged largely under the inspiration of his call, became incorporated in the programmes of political leaders and parties, and, with comparative rapidity, became enshrined in Acts of Parliament.

This is one of the chief reasons why to-day his writings excite less controversy and perhaps less popular interest. The issues he raised have in not a few cases been settled. Either his policy has been carried out, or it has become the acceptable foundation for social or political reformers to build upon. The student of modern progress has only to consider the policies now carried out, wholly or in part, of which Ruskin was the definite pioneer to realize the truth of the claim here made. They include policies relating to land and reform, the methods of dealing with slums, modern methods of taxation, the scientific treatment of such problems as unemployment, sweating, the care of the aged poor, the hours and conditions of labour and the relations between capital and labour, the reform of our educational system, the planning of cities, and many others. In re-reading his books written from forty to eighty years ago it is hard to resist a feeling of amazement at finding set forth the exact proposals then regarded as the unbalanced extravagance of a fanatic, which have since been carried out in the letter and the spirit, affecting almost every aspect of the social change and reconstruction which we have witnessed during the past four or five decades.

The contents of this book, by writers of widely divergent views, are an examination of some aspects of his work and

teaching, and, in part, an estimate of his influence. But the greatest tribute to Ruskin is not to be found in any record of legislation or material changes. It is to be found in the inspiration he brought into the lives of men, and in the new vision given to the world.

RUSKIN

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

RUSKIN

JOHN RUSKIN was born on this day one hundred years ago. That is more than three generations ago. The war makes it seem like seven generations.

It was a great and terrible time one hundred years ago. A great war was just over. The world was full of eminent soldiers and sailors, who would never again be wanted, and of eminent statesmen in full talk. Keats, Shelley, William Blake and Turner, four of our greatest Englishmen, were alive, in their fullest power. Fox-hunting had reached its highest perfection. There were public executions every Monday. Industries and their black cities were springing up in the North and in the Midlands beyond the most greedy dream of the economists. The population was increasing, and by going at the age of six into factories was early trained in habits of industry. The mind of man was about to accept the steam engine and had not yet begun to question its God. Many thought that the time was such as the world had never seen. All times are that.

Ruskin was born into that time, and grew up in the sheltered parts of it, that offered beauty and quiet and leisure for growth. He went to the most beautiful college in the most beautiful university in the world. He is said to have been a winning young man, with bright blue eyes and an eloquent eager charm. Before he was twenty, he looked out upon the world with his bright blue eyes and made up his mind about it.

In many times of history, great men, looking at their native lands, have felt them to be spiritual powers, to whose service

they could consecrate their lives. Others, even greater men, looking at their native lands, have felt them to be so certainly right in the main issues as not to need thought. They have accepted them simply as natural laws or parts of the universe. Ruskin, looking out upon his native land some eighty years ago, decided that he could not believe in it, that there was nothing spiritual there which he could trust, nor human work being done which he could share, and that if it were a spiritual power at all it was the devil from hell.

This shocked him, for he was a right-minded and pure-hearted lad, who had been brought up to know England as a lovely land, whose simple people had produced much loveliness in thought and deed. Like many of us, he had loved the thought that the patron saint of England was that St. George who had once, at the risk of his life, saved a woman from a dragon. He thought, as perhaps many of us have thought, that that was a fine kind of saint for a land and that none but a fine kind of people would have chosen such a saint. Looking out upon the England of his time, he felt that the nation had forgotten the saint and was being false to her own soul.

Now in much of this judgment he was perhaps wrong. It is no easy task to govern many millions of turbulent people after a great revolution and a great war, when the very work of the nation is swiftly changing from agricultural to industrial. The land was in a molten state; there was no effective spiritual mould to give beautiful form to the metal, so it puddled as it could, often hideously; but in spite of the ugliness and the savage, squalid injustice and cruelty, a great deal of work was being solidly done, and as a result of that work more people were living in this country than had ever lived before. Ruskin saw that much of the life was hideous and most of the work wasteful. But life is a good thing—where there is a lot of life there is a chance of an improvement in this old world, and I think that even the wretchedest of those millions of very wretched 1840 people would rather

have lived than not lived. Ruskin was young, and the young are perhaps always a little over-ready to allot praise or blame.

Then he was shocked by many things. He was shocked that England had ceased to believe in St. George and had substituted for him that image of grossness and obstruction, John Bull, who came to us with the German Kings. I have seen many images of John Bull, but none showing him as a person who would think, or pray, or fight, or be courteous, or chivalrous, or merciful, or practice any art, or sing, or be delightful, or make love, or do a decent day's work, or have an enlightened idea, or be tolerable company under any circumstances whatsoever. He is always a gross animal man, standing in the way. That pretty much is what Ruskin thought him; Ruskin turned away from him with a passionate repugnance.

And seeing this creature in the place of the spirit of St. George, the blackness of his waste defiling the land and debasing the life of England, with a greed and a fury to which we are accustomed, but which was then new, Ruskin decided that the nation had forgotten its soul, and must be brought back to it by the things which belonged unto its peace.

Other people, at that time, thought that the nation had forgotten its soul. Many thought that the only remedy was for a rising of the wretched and a slaughter of the oppressors, at some feast of the pikes, bloodier than the French Terror. Some thought that the remedy would be for some Prussian to arise among us, to take us by the scruffs of the necks and make us soldiers for our own good, so that we might conquer other people for their good, and then have industrious wives for our own good, and read German to them for their good; and then die, I suppose, for the world's good, and have this epitaph: "He cared for thrift and industry and self-control," or "Here there is dawning another blue day, think wilt thou let it pass useless away"—something that would do posterity good. That seemed a possible medicine to many once.

Ruskin did not see peace in either direction. In the one case he only saw one savagery of evil stamping out another savagery of evil, and in the other he only saw an ordered tyranny taking the place of a disordered freedom. He saw no peace there, nor any prospect of peace coming from anything approaching either method.

He did not see any happiness of man coming from the politician or the Prussian. But looking at life, he saw that there were certain things which belong unto our peace, and that Divine minds have at all times loved and sought after these things, and that these things are at all times open to all. These things are "the glorification of God and the enjoying Him forever." That is what all divine minds and beautiful natures do, and by their measure of performance in it can their beauty and divinity be measured. They realize intensely, within themselves, the bounty of God and the beauty of the world, and they live in the exultation of those things, crying aloud their delight.

Ruskin felt, I think, from the first, that the bounty of God was one with the beauty of the world, and that any real feeling about that beauty was a feeling for the Divine, a touching of God, a bringing of God into men's minds. He believed this, and believing it, he realized that by that belief a man, any man, rich or poor, could live in happiness according to the will of God. In doing His will is our Peace. So turning to the life of his time, he saw that several men were living in the glorification and enjoyment of the beauty of the world, and that one man pre-eminently lived so, the painter Turner, then in the fulness of his power.

The Italian Renaissance came to us very late, long after the old learning had been forgotten and cast aside and the new learning had ceased to be an inspiration. When the Renaissance came to us our great artists had ceased to brood upon the mysteries of Christianity and the glories of Paganism. They brooded on the mysteries of the faces of lords and ladies and on the glories of the English country side, that landscape

of great valley and little hill, which is lovelier than any landscape in this world. There is no more exquisite feeling about the beauty of the world than in the best English landscape. Think of our landscape painters, Wilson, Crome, Varley, Girtin, Gainsborough, Constable, Blake, Linnell, with Turner at the head, and of the landscape in our poetry, in Gray, in Wordsworth, in Keats, in Tennyson.

Ruskin saw that in Turner a spirit was brooding intensely upon the beauty and the bounty of the world, revealing depths not suspected and truths and marvels not hitherto revealed. He saw that every act of that great artist was an exultation in natural beauty, and that by the contemplation of that beauty men might come to a knowledge of themselves and of their place in the scheme of the world.

And just when he perceived this most passionately (in his young manhood) that natural beauty was being threatened from without by the machine and the foundry and the railway. We, now, are used to our cities being filthy and to tracts of our country being black, and to the railway as a means of transport. But in Ruskin's time those things were only beginning, and their beginning seemed to him a vile poisoning and degradation for base and beastly purposes of whatever was lovely and sacred, on which the mind of man could brood and in which the eye of man could see the Divine. He saw what he calls "the blunt hand" marring the Divine vision—John Bull waddling in to the place of St. George, the Divine revealer flouted by this not very golden, but rather stony Jerusalem, which had stoned so many of the prophets, Blake and Keats and Wordsworth.

He was moved to protest with a beauty of passionate eloquence, and a wisdom and a knowledge quite astounding in a man so young. His book, which had in the first aim been a defence of Turner, became a statement of the belief upon which he based his life and practice. Men do not change much from youth to age; they develop and they learn, but their natures remain much as they were in youth. So it was

with Ruskin ; his life-work was passionate eloquence upon the things that belong unto our peace.

He believed that happiness could be attained by a right direction of the mind towards action in unity with the Divine Will, everywhere present in the world. "Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth Me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." He believed that all simple people held the key to happiness ; by a simple person he meant one who saw clearly and felt intensely from a pure heart. He believed that simple persons alone had entered the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth, and that that kingdom was nothing but a calm and delighted brooding followed by right and beautiful action, and that if men would but brood calmly and delightedly on the things that belong unto their pecae, their acts would be right and their doings just and their lives happy and their works beautiful, and that then this England would be green and clean again, and the people no longer ground in the mills, these black Satanic mills as English Blake called them, but "like green olive-trees in the house of God, giving thanks for ever."

I suppose that no man has been more abused. He was a man of many powers, an artist in two kinds, subject to attack in both, and a philosopher with theories designed to rouse the world. He roused the world. I have heard a banker condemn his political economy, and a prose writer condemn his prose, and a draughtsman condemn his drawings, with the utmost savagery, but yet the banker praised his prose and the prose writer praised his drawings and the draughtsman praised his political economy. They saw that a great man had passed them. His arts are those which touch the heart, not the trained and restless intellect.

He spent his life telling men that they would be happy if they thought rightly and did justly and with mercy and with beauty and generosity. People said that he talked great nonsense and that he had better leave it to the experts. It was

left to the experts. Competitive commercialism triumphed and ended in the Great War. Some of the results are before us. It would be better not to blame his theories till they've been tried.

I expect he had many faults as a man and a writer. I never knew any man or writer worth anything without plenty of both. I suppose that the charge most commonly brought against him is that he considered the lilies of the field too much and not enough the tragical restless drive of the mind and passion of man. I suppose he thought men were tragical and restless because they didn't consider the lilies enough. One ought to consider the lilies of the field. Remember Landor, who pitched a waiter out of a three-story window into the garden, and then cried, "Good God, I forgot the violets underneath."

His drawings are here for us to look at, gathered together with care and tact. They persuade of themselves.

So now I come to the end. His theories, his writing and his drawing. But I haven't mentioned the great thing in him. Once in a play, years ago, I heard him called "the philosopher of the young ladies' seminary." There are worse things than that. For people do not change much. Young ladies grow up, and what was beautiful in youth, really livingly beautiful, is beautiful through life. The great thing in Ruskin is that he is an inspiration to the young and to the generous of all ages, there is no heart in this room which has not beat the quicker for the generosity of his lovely mind.

I suppose we are all hardened in our beliefs and styles and political opinions and personal hatreds. Yet I know one thing :

If the figure of Ruskin were to appear here suddenly, with his eager look, and blue eyes and harelip, and were to speak again with that old silver tongue, and to say : "Come on, have done with all this folly ; we will remake the world, we will make this England like a beauty among still waters, like a green olive-tree in the house of God forever and ever," we would rise up wild with joy and do as he bade us.

RUSKIN AND PLATO

BY
THE DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S

RUSKIN AND PLATO

RUSKIN is remembered by the world in two capacities. He was an art-critic, and he was a social reformer. These two activities seem to be, and usually have been, so far apart from each other that we tend to think that there were two Ruskins. We assume that we have a right to be his disciples in admiring Turner and Gothic architecture and Italian churches, while rejecting his social and economic teaching as the rhetoric of an unpractical dreamer, ignorant of political economy. Or we are warmed by his denunciations of brutal industrialism, while caring little for his theories of the beautiful. But if we tear Ruskin into two halves in this way, we shall be sure to misunderstand him. It is true that he began as an art-critic and ended as a social reformer, but it is not true that he ceased to be the first in order that he might become the second. His zeal for social reform grew quite naturally and legitimately out of his æsthetic studies. The two topics are vitally connected, as he always maintained. If they are not connected in reality, as they were in his mind, the keystone is knocked out of his teaching, and his authority is destroyed, both as a critic of painting and architecture and as a critic of society. The close connection of the decay of art with faulty social arrangements was his great discovery. Ugliness in the works of man is a symptom of disease in the State. This was Ruskin's conviction, and we may call it his discovery. Wordsworth and others had turned their backs upon the modern town, because it expressed nothing to them ; they wished to forget it, and to commune with unspoilt nature. Ruskin could not forget the modern town, because it expressed

a great deal to him, and all that it expressed to him was very bad. It spoilt his pleasure in contemplating nature. He remembered that he was a man, and could count nothing human alien to himself.

Let us remember—for it is a very significant fact—that it is a new thing for a town to be regarded as a blot upon a landscape. Men used to look with pleasure upon the outward signs of human habitation. A city was a glorious and beautiful thing, an object to contemplate with pride and pleasure. "The hill of Zion is a fair place, the joy of the whole earth," not in spite of the city which crowned it, but because God was known in her palaces and manifest in her bulwarks. The change came about rather suddenly, as Ruskin observed, and was coincident with what we now call the industrial revolution, the period of great industries. The works of man became ugly and unexpressive in the reign of George III, and continued so through the nineteenth century, to our own day. The unconscious production of beautiful things ceased at that time; and when men began to take thought about being artistic, they produced self-conscious, smirking beauties which were generally lamentable failures. Romanticism, which dotes on ruins and can create nothing new, expressed itself in sham castles, Gothic churches in which everything is subtly wrong, overgrown cottages with absurd gables, and all the humbug of Wardour Street. Ruskin saw that towns and houses and pictures are human actions; and the distress which the new England gave him as an artist opened his eyes to the moral ugliness and meanness of the new phase of civilization which called such things into being and expressed itself in them. As an art-critic he had taught that beauty is fundamentally a matter of right values, and that all ugliness has its root in a false or mean or vulgar standard of values. But conduct also is determined by our standard of values, which alone gives life its meaning. If our values are perverted, our social order, in which our notions of good and evil express themselves, will be perverse and bad, and there will be no beauty in what

we do or in what we make. Vulgarity is the outward and visible sign of a wrong attitude to life, of ignorance of good and evil, of the worship of unworthy idols. And as the disappearance of beauty in the works of man had coincided with the invention of machinery and the development of industries on a large scale, there was a presumption that the two events were closely connected.

Ruskin avowed himself to be a disciple of Carlyle, and it is plain that the two men were engaged upon the same crusade. Carlyle's thought was determined by the reaction against many of the "ideas of 1789," as displayed in their results during the revolutionary period. He hated its scepticism, its negations, its love of sonorous phrases and claptrap, its materialism, its atheism, and perhaps above all its anarchism. Like many others of his generation, he wished to return to idealism, to personal religion, and to a well-ordered organization of society. He and Ruskin both wrote with the violence of major prophets: this was a characteristic of the age. Swinburne, Hugo and Morris were also angry and vehement writers. But Carlyle was, what Ruskin was not, a Puritan. He was not (as Sir Henry Taylor called him) "a Puritan who has lost his creed"; Carlyle never lost the Puritan creed; he was a Puritan without the dogmas of his sect. The creed of Puritanism is the creed of Stoicism; and there is something in this type of mind which turns its creed into a war-cry. The creed must be felt to have a direct and forcible application to life; it must be a steady and potent call to battle for the right. So Carlyle could not approve of Coleridge, who, though he shared most of the same philosophical ideas, had not the courage "to cross the desert," to go through the pathless tract, beyond which is the "eternal yea." Carlyle respected everything that is thoroughgoing, even in evil. Life must be unified under the direction of a philosophy which resolves all contradictions and harmonizes all discords. He disliked natural science, as being atomistic: in his eyes it disintegrated and pulverized reality. This was of course a mistake; but the objection

could be reasonably brought against some of the science of that time. For the same reason he disliked Mill, as "sawdustish." Behind his Stoicism or Calvinism was a strong background of mysticism. We stand at the "conflux of eternities," in comparison with which our temporal existence is only a phantasmagoria. He was fond of quoting Shakespeare's lines: "We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded with a sleep." The whirring loom of time, which in Goethe's famous words—another favourite quotation with Carlyle—weaves the garment by which we see God, throws off revolutions and counter-revolutions, convulsions which at the time seem portentous, but which die down and vanish in so far as they do not express the eternal counsels of God. The law of the universe is Justice; wrong and fraud and shams of all kinds have a short life; history condemns, exposes and destroys them. Carlyle is often accused of teaching that Might is Right; he really held that Right is Might, if we take long views. It is not altogether true; for spiritual forces prevail in their own field, which is not that of external and palpable success. We must neither revive the Deuteronomic creed that righteousness leads to outward prosperity, nor fall victims to the snobbishness of historians who judge, after the event, that every apparently lost cause is the wrong cause. But there is a sense in which "the history of the world is the judgment of the world"; and this is what Carlyle, in all his historical writings, means to assert. His romanticism showed itself in making idols of prominent historical personages, to whose personal initiation he ascribed much that was really forced upon them by the circumstances of their time. This is a natural mistake for a historian who has not himself been an actor in public events. He and Ruskin were both intellectual aristocrats, and heartily despised ballot-box democracy, a fetish which now, after a century of fatuous laudation, stands very insecurely on its pedestal. He was firmly convinced that in spite of the complacent trumpetings of Macaulay and the commercial

school, civilization had taken a wrong and ultimately disastrous turn. He loved the simple peasant life in which he had been brought up, and had his full share of personal pride, the pride of the independent and poor man. Ruskin was much nearer to Carlyle than to Rossetti, in whom he could find no over-mastering purpose and no social conscience, as Carlyle could find none in Coleridge. The prophet in him condemned the purely artistic temperament of his friend.

But there is another great man to whom Ruskin owed perhaps even more than to Carlyle. Ruskin was after all (as I have said) no Puritan, and the beautiful world, whether of nature or of art, had messages for him which the dour Annandale peasant could neither see nor hear. Ruskin was all his life a devout disciple of Plato. In 1843 he says: "I think myself very wrong if I do not read a little bit of Plato very carefully every day." And later he writes: "I must do my Plato; I am never well without that." The habit of constantly reading Plato, slowly and carefully, seems to have been kept up through a great part of his life. Being dissatisfied with Jowett's translation, he wrote out a new translation of a great part of Plato's longest work, the *Laws*. The influence of Plato was very wholesome for him, as indeed it is for almost everybody. For Plato was endowed by nature with a magnificent healthiness, both of body and mind, which was denied to Ruskin, and he was, like most Greek men of letters, also a man of affairs. The fundamental sanity which underlies Ruskin's frequent violence of language and occasional real perversity, owed much to Plato.

Let us consider this debt, or this natural affinity, rather more in detail. Both are accused of what has been called the moralistic fallacy in art-criticism. Plato would banish all poets who are not edifying: his test of good music is its effect upon the moral character, and so on. This confusion of two standards undoubtedly led the Greeks, and perhaps Ruskin too, into some errors; but the ultimate identity, or at any rate perfect harmony, of the good, the true, and the beautiful,

an article of faith which will help a critic far more than it hinders him. That the highest art requires moral elevation in the artist Plato and Ruskin believed. It is not a universally accepted truth ; and examples which seem to refute it may easily be found ; but unless we are content with perfect technique, which we may find no doubt in writers and artists so little morally estimable as Sappho, Benvenuto Cellini, Verlaine and D'Annunzio, I think it is probably true. The famous doctrine of Ideas would now be called a philosophy of absolute and eternal Values ; this was certainly part of Ruskin's faith. His objection to natural science was that it emptied the world of values—or so it seemed to him—and the misunderstanding was not entirely inexcusable. The eternal Values are for the Platonist not only ideals, but operative laws, creative powers ; and the objects or actions which are formed or done "according to the pattern showed us in the mount" are the most real and the most significant things in the world of experience. Ruskin quarrelled with the orthodox political economy for substituting exchangeable commodities for vital values, and for treating social and economic questions as problems in mathematics. It is impossible, he argued, to solve these questions mathematically, because they deal with incommensurables. We cannot say how much money should be given to a man for creating a noble work of art, nor on the other hand for being forced to make sonething which is ugly and useless. On the money-making life Ruskin follows the Greeks, but the counter-irritant furnished by the spectacle of nineteenth-century England makes him more violent and unreasonable than Plato. We often want to remind him of Dr. Johnson's candid and absolutely true remark, that the average man is seldom so harmlessly occupied as when he is making money. The Greeks regarded the money-making life as a legitimate but not very ambitious career for a man to choose. It never occurred to them to measure the success of a statesman or author or artist by the amount of money which he contrived

to make. This vulgarity is a modern aberration. But Plato has a strong preference for the "self-sufficing State," which for a Greek meant the practice of mixed farming. The Greek city-states had each their small piece of fertile valley and hillside, enough to support a little town which could not be allowed to increase. It was absolutely necessary to fix "the number of the State." But imperial Athens had grown far beyond the capacity of the poor soil of Attica; and in order to pay for the food which she imported from the Balkans and South Russia, she had to become a manufacturing town. Conservatives like Plato disliked this development for precisely the same reasons for which Ruskin disliked the industrial revolution, and Plato was determined that his ideal Republic should not be industrial. What could be more Ruskinian than the following passage from the *Laws*? "The city of which we are speaking is some eighty furlongs from the sea. Then there is some hope that your citizens may be virtuous. Had you been on the sea, and well provided with harbours, and an importing rather than a producing country, some mighty saviour would have been needed, and law-givers more than mortal, if you were even to have a chance of preserving your State from degeneracy. The sea is pleasant enough as a daily companion, but indeed it has also a bitter and brackish quality, filling the streets with merchants and shopkeepers, and begetting in the souls of men uncertain and dishonest ways, making the State unfaithful and unfriendly to her own children and to other nations. There is a consolation therefore in the State producing all things at home, and nothing in great abundance. Otherwise there might have been a great export trade, and a great return of gold and silver, which has the most fatal results on a state whose aim is the attainment of just and noble sentiments." Plato had seen, on a very small scale, the price which every nation has to pay for a large population and commercial prosperity, and his deliberate opinion is that the price is too high. He prefers the older and simpler type of social structure, in which each community is

self-contained, producing what is sufficient for its own modest needs. Ruskin agrees with him. But both Plato and Ruskin were aware, as most of our social reformers are not, that a return to this simple type of society can only be made on certain conditions. In Mallock's *New Republic*, Mr. Herbert, that is to say Professor Ruskin, is made to say that he would like to blow up all our great industrial towns. "And the operatives in them?" he is asked by another member of the symposium. "Well, perhaps I should give them notice of my gunpowder plot," says Mr. Herbert. But what is the use of giving them notice, if you are going to blow up their homes and take away their means of livelihood? That is the point. It is the crucial question not only for Ruskin, but for all who wish to destroy the existing social order. The inhabitants of our great cities are discontented with their lot. It is generally assumed that they are discontented because they are underpaid. This can hardly be true; for since the war they have not been underpaid; they are better off than they ever were before, and better off than most of them ever expected to be. And they are more bitter and discontented than ever. Ruskin is perhaps right in thinking that subconsciously they are unhappy because their lives are so ugly. A thinker who approached the problem rather from the biological than the artistic side might say that our town populations are living under conditions to which the human organism has not adapted itself. For hundreds of thousands of years the human race has been a race of country dwellers. It has developed country tastes; it is most at home when it is cultivating the soil, or hunting, or fighting. The rich man achieves a purgation of these emotions, as Aristotle would say, by taking a holiday every year in Scotland or elsewhere, when he can pretend, when he is out of doors, to be a primitive barbarian. After two months of this concession to clamorous instincts, he returns refreshed to ten months at his office, relieved perhaps by short holidays in the country. The poor man has no such opportunities, and he suffers from a chronic malaise

which he does not understand himself. What he really wants is to go back to more primitive and natural conditions. But these conditions are unattainable under an industrial civilization ; and if the industrial organization of society came to an end, neither ancient Athens nor modern England could support half the population which Plato and Ruskin found in their respective countries. Accordingly, even if we limit our programme to preventing conditions from getting worse, a State regulation of population is necessary. Plato faced this question, and accepted the principle of State-regulation. When the " number of the State " settled by the Government threatened to increase, citizens were to be induced, by considerations of public interest, to limit their families, and from time to time colonies were to be sent out, just like a swarm of bees, to some place where there was room for them. This had been the regular remedy for over-population in an earlier stage of Greek history. The Greek colonies had been founded precisely in this manner. Colonization, which had planted Greek cities from Marseilles to the Crimea, only ceased when all the available sites had been occupied, and when the Greeks found themselves headed off in the West by the Phœnicians and in the East by the Persian Empire. Plato, who is avowedly dealing with ideal conditions, does not make any suggestions as to where unoccupied and available sites for colonies could be found in his day. But he does realize that the population question is at the root of all schemes for social reform. So does Ruskin. He also is in favour of State-regulation of population, and of eugenics. He is therefore far more honest and more practical than modern Socialists, who deliberately shirk this problem. Of course the tremendous difficulty still remains what to do with the crowded populations which already exist under conditions which they themselves wish to destroy. How can they destroy these conditions without destroying themselves at the same time ? Are we to look for such a remedy as that which Bolshevik Russia is applying to itself—Russia, in which famine and disease have

destroyed a large fraction of the nation, and in which it is said that not a single baby is to be found in some large towns? This is the problem which civilization has to face, if we are determined to make an end of industrialism and go back to the Platonic and Ruskinian type of state. You will remember how Anatole France, at the end of the *Isle of the Penguins*, describes the downfall of the modern city, with its millionaires, factories and sky-scrapers, at the hands of the anarchists, and how, after the revolution, the island passed through a period of pastoral and bucolic existence, with peaceful villages dotted over the country side, until the process of industrialization began again, and the great cities reappeared just as before. Something of the kind may happen. The old Greeks were right in believing that human affairs move in recurring cycles. The thing that hath been is the thing that shall be.

Are we right in condemning Plato and Ruskin as "unpractical"? They did not mean to be so. Plato himself was political adviser to Dionysius of Syracuse, and his failure in Sicily does not seem to have been his own fault. Other philosophers had been the counsellors of kings and rulers, as Lysis the Pythagorean of Epaminondas, and, after Plato, Aristotle of Alexander the Great. Moreover, it was quite usual for a new colony, or an old city after a revolution, to call in a foreign "lawgiver" to draw up a written constitution for them. The fiction of the *Laws*, Ruskin's favourite dialogue, is that a new colony is about to be established in Crete, on the deserted site of Cnossus, and that an Athenian stranger (who of course represents Plato himself) has been called in to help the chief magistrate and a Spartan to make laws for the State. Plato thought that a strong monarchy, acting under the advice of a philosopher, was the nearest practicable approach to the philosophic king who was his ideal. Not that he was in favour of despotism. By family tradition he was an Athenian Whig; and he says in the *Laws* that the best constitution is half way between the Persian

monarchy and Athenian democracy. He would probably have admired the late lamented British Constitution. The details of his political and social schemes, whether in the *Republic* or in the *Laws*, are often unworkable, and he knew it well enough. But there is no reason why the political philosopher should be a practical statesman. There are two questions to be asked in politics, as in everything else: What do we want? and How are we to get it? Plato and Ruskin had a clear notion of the kind of society which they wanted, and they wrote in order to recommend and clarify their ideals. Those who agree with them will at any rate know what they are aiming at. The question how to bring it about will probably have to be left to minds of a different type.

Plato comes near to Christianity in holding that we are citizens of a spiritual city, of which the type is laid up in heaven, and that we ought to direct our lives by the laws of this perfect community, revealed to us by philosophy, and not by those of the imperfect copies of it which exist on earth. He says in the *Republic*, "Whether there is or ever will be such a city as we have described is of no consequence to him who wishes to see it; for he will act according to the laws of that city and no other." Ruskin also, though he was never afraid to put his theories to the touch of experiment, gave the rein to "Thoughts hardly to be packed Into a narrow act, Fancies that broke through language and escaped; All I could never be, All men ignored in me, That was I worth to God, Whose wheel the pitcher shaped." It is better for the prophet to give us his ideal clean-cut and perfect; the unhappy compromises with the actual and the practicable, which must be made before the ideal can take its place in history, are best left to others, to the popularizers and tacticians of the political arena. But it is the mark of the true Platonist to long to apply the touchstone of experiment to his visions and theories. He is no dreamer, whatever man may say of him. Plato, as we have seen, tried to direct the policy of Sicily, at a time when the fate of that island was of the greatest importance to

the whole Greek world. Plotinus wished to found a city on a deserted site in Campania, where the principles of Plato's *Republic* might be carried out in practice. Ruskin tried many experiments in reforming industry and education ; and surely we may say that the wonder is, not that some of them failed, but that so many of them were at least partially successful. That the disease of our social order was too deep-seated to be cured by any experiments such as he could make, he would have been the first to admit himself.

The Platonist tries to realize his ideals, because he must. No sooner does he *see* anything clearly with the eye of his soul, than he becomes a creator. The absolute values, once clearly grasped, begin to shape the external world. Ruskin's theory of value began to clash at once with the theory of value which he found generally accepted and almost universally acted upon. To the economist of his day, value meant exchange-value. A thing was worth what somebody else would give you for it. If somebody else wants it very much, its value is enhanced ; if you can prevent him from getting it except by buying it from you, its value may be whatever price you choose to put upon it. Against this theory Ruskin maintained that the value of a thing is "what it can do for you"; it does not depend upon other things or other people, or on other people's opinions. Again, the current political economy assumes that work is an evil, and that man must somehow be bribed or coerced into doing it. Ruskin held that work is a good, and ought to be a pleasure. This line of thought has since been developed in the doctrine of "human costs" as an important factor to be taken into account in political economy. Accordingly he thought it a matter of primary importance to make the worker interested in his work for its own sake, and to give him work to do which will call out all his faculties. Psychologists entirely agree with him when he says that the unpleasantness of mechanical work is due not only to the nervous strain of constantly repeating the same motion, but to the fact that it

leaves unused many of the faculties of the human mind, which rebel against their neglect and cause unhappiness.

Here of course we have touched upon one of the great problems of industrial life. Are we frankly to admit that the work of an artisan in a factory must, under modern conditions, be dull and unpleasant? And are we to compensate the worker for this sacrifice by giving him high wages and short hours, which are possible under scientific management and extreme subdivision of labour, but not under any other conditions? It is well known that many workmen hate being turned into machines and forbidden to use their imagination and intelligence. They would even prefer more variety and lower wages; though in this country they cannot be said to have faced the fact that this is the alternative. Or are we to treat the workman as an artist, and acquiesce in the consequence that production will fall off? Ruskin was entirely in favour of the latter policy, and he did not think it an evil that there would be fewer machine-made goods to buy. But he does not seem, in this case, to have looked all round the subject. We are at present too much dependent on foreign trade to forego the advantages of cheapness. To put the matter shortly, if we cannot export our manufactures, we cannot import our food. And to look at the home market only: could good craftsmanship, such as he wishes to encourage, flourish under such a state of comparative poverty and equality as would result from his reforms? History seems to show that good craftsmanship, with its careful and leisurely methods, is rarely possible, and that where it is possible it depends directly on the patronage of a rich and magnificent class, or on very low standards of living among craftsmen. The great Gothic churches were the work of unknown artisans working for a rich and powerful Church. The Church could pay for magnificent buildings, and it could get good labour cheap because the workers were in a state of serfdom. Their work was not done under economic conditions, any more than the illumination of MSS. by the

monks. The artistic ideas were, I suppose, the contribution of religious persons who were supported by their endowments. The art of the Renaissance was fostered by magnificent princes and popes. William Morris's skilled craftsmen could not have afforded to buy the wallpapers and chintzes which they made. It is true that Ruskin was no advocate of economic levelling as an end in itself; but his principles were certainly adverse to any great inequality; and without great inequality of fortunes could a national art flourish? Is there any instance of a nation producing great works of art under a system of equal rewards for every day's work? In Japan, as in ancient Athens, fine artists were poorly paid; but the hardy simplicity of those two nations would not commend itself to the modern European. This aspect of the question does not seem to have been adequately considered. Many kinds of literary work are equally dependent upon what Aristotle calls ἡ ἐκτὸς χορηγία. Ruskin himself could hardly have written *Modern Painters* without the paternal sherry at his back. Darwin as a working man or impecunious bank clerk might have won a local reputation as a collector of beetles, but he would not have written the *Origin of Species*. And historians, from Thucydides the mine-owner to Grote the banker, have generally been opulent.

The combination of aristocratism and socialism in Ruskin will continue to puzzle his readers, as the same combination puzzles the readers of Plato. Ruskin, like Carlyle, exalts the functions of the captain of industry, and would give him the powers of a general in his business. He was also a true Platonist in his faith in coercion and the repression of disorder by force. He was not in principle opposed to religious persecution, which Plato wishes to sanction in his ideal State. There is of course nothing anti-socialistic in this. Only muddle-headed people suppose that a socialistic State could exist without vigorous coercion. There is no form of government more incompatible with the sentimental humanitarianism and lawlessness of those who often call themselves

Socialists. But it is not worth while to insist on the opposition of socialism to democracy, since both Plato and Ruskin make no secret of their contempt for democracy. What I think is important for an understanding of Ruskin's economic teaching is to note the change which has come over theoretical socialism since the famous book of Karl Marx on Capital. The orthodox view of Socialists who followed Marx was that all wealth is really produced by labour, and that the capitalist has simply robbed the hand-worker of a great part of his earnings. To confiscate the interest paid to the capitalist was represented as a mere act of justice. This theory is by no means obsolete, but it has been frequently disproved. Those who still defend it usually do so in a modified form, saying for example, that though labour does not produce the whole of wealth, it produces a much larger fraction of it than it usually receives. Socialists have usually been wisely shy of practical experiments ; but a few have been made, of which the most remarkable is the Australian adventure in Paraguay. Here a number of hand workers, adequately supplied with capital of their own, bought a tract of good land and tried to manage it on socialistic principles. The failure was even more complete and ignominious than the enemies of socialism would have predicted. In a few years the only survivors of the colony were a few backsliders who had bought land for themselves. These soon became rich. But there is another socialistic theory, quite different from that of Marx, and it is this that we find in Ruskin. A man might argue as follows : It is both impossible and unnecessary to decide who produces wealth, and what proportion ought to go to the capitalist, what to the manager, what to the foreman, and what to the manual workers. It is unnecessary, because there is no reason why distribution should be determined by production. The true formula is not, Give every man what he has earned : it is, From each according to his capacity ; to each according to his needs. Men are unequal, one man can produce far more than another ; but that is no reason why he should receive

more than another. Our capacities are given us by nature, or by God; they are no credit to us. And nature has limited very closely the legitimate needs of the most skilful and energetic producer. We have only one stomach; we need to support only one family; and so on. It is no kindness to a man to allow him to accumulate enough for fifty families, and it is unjust, because the money might be given to those who really need it, and whom it would make happy. Even if we put this argument in a less rigorous form, and allow that social efficiency ought to receive some reward, it is plain that there are many different kinds of merit, and that distribution according to production recognizes and rewards one kind of merit only. As Ruskin somewhere says, the industrial system makes life difficult or impossible for the saint as well as for the ne'er-do-well, for the philosopher as well as for the idiot. It rewards a Jay Gould with a hundred million dollars, and leaves a Millet to die in penury. This is not justice; it is ridiculous. And until we abandon the principle of money-payment according to results, we shall have these absurdities. This is the kind of socialism which Ruskin advocates in *Unto this Last*. It is very much better than the theories of Marx, and as it appeals to a much higher conception of justice, it does not generate the savage bitterness of the man who thinks he is being robbed. Many people would say that this kind of socialism is to be found in the Gospels. It is the justification pleaded for most of the doles which in various forms are now paid for by taxes levied by the majority on the minority, and the tendency becomes stronger every year to regard all superfluities as fair game for the exchequer. Human nature being what it is, we cannot be surprised that the masses, now conscious of their power, have pounced upon the attractive formula, "To each according to his needs," or rather, according to his desires, while repudiating the other half of the maxim, "From each according to his capacities." But this is no fault of Ruskin, who thoroughly understood that until our standard of values

is altered, we shall continue to rob each other and be consumed by envy, greed and incurable unhappiness.

The last topic on which we must touch in comparing Ruskin with Plato is that of education. Both alike attach the very greatest importance to the training of the young, and the ideas of the two reformers are strikingly similar. Both are opposed to mechanical and external ways of instructing the youthful mind, and are far more interested in the formation of character than in the imparting of knowledge. But the commercialism of nineteenth-century England was far more acute and pervasive than the low ambition which Plato thought was encouraged by the Sophist. Not only is education in England measured by quantitative standards, such as the percentage of marks in an examination—a tendency, by the way, which has beeen largely increased by Government inspections and "grants," but the "gospel of getting on" is sedulously inculcated in all schools alike, with the hearty approbation of parents. Reading, writing and arithmetic are useful in business; the last, especially, is essential to keeping accounts. It belongs to the quantitative standard in education that it stimulates or exercises the memory alone among the child's faculties, loading his mind with undigested gobbets of fact, to be presently disgorged in the same state at the next examination. The whole system is mechanical; and the schoolmaster urges on his pupils, no longer by the rod, but by appealing to the competitive instinct, which seems to be exceptionally strong in the English character. Ruskin is quite right in saying that the spirit of keen rivalry, which debases even money-making, is ruinous when the object is, or should be, to enrich the mind with intellectual and spiritual wealth. The value of even the highest studies is destroyed—perhaps the value of the highest studies is destroyed most completely—when they are pursued with the sole object of "coming out top" in a struggle with competitors. Ruskin knew the value of competition as an incentive; he was not in the clouds about the nature of the young; but he tells

them, "I want you to compete, not for the praise of what you know, but for the praise of what you become; and to compete only in that great school where death is the examiner and God the judge." This is not, perhaps, very clear, for in spiritual goods one man's gain is not another man's loss, so that there is no competition in the ordinary sense, but only emulation; but it is plain that Ruskin wants the young to think of the value of their studies to themselves far more than the credit which they may win by excelling in them. Ruskin, as usual, pushes a good principle to excess, and sometimes speaks as if the acquisition of knowledge were worthless; but we must make allowance for the tendency of all prophets to hyperbole. All children, Ruskin thinks, ought to be educated in the country, in order that the influences of nature may sink into them. There is no way of providing a substitute for this half-unconscious intimacy with nature; a town-bred child cannot have a good education. This is probably true, and it reinforces what I said above of the terrible dilemma which seems to threaten us—either to abolish industrialism and plough up the sites of our towns, or to watch the growing rebellion of masses of men and women condemned to an unwholesome and unnatural life. Ruskin sums up his view of the function of education in the words: "You do not educate a man by telling him what he knew not, but by making him what he was not," a thoroughly Socratic sentiment. He also insists, with Plato, that the object of education is not merely to turn out perfect individuals, but perfect citizens. A man can be a perfect individual only in a well-ordered society. His claim that every school should be artistically beautiful and handsomely appointed is perhaps a counsel of perfection. One feels impatient at sentimentalists who always cry out, "Hang the expense," when the expense after all is a very serious matter, and would not perhaps fall on their shoulders. But Ruskin is surely entirely right when he insists on the importance of teaching children to *make* things, as the most important part of their training. Drawing,

carving, carpentering, are excellent; so is essay writing; and in humanistic studies few parts of them are more valuable than composition, in prose and verse, in English and other languages. The outcry against verse composition is based on the wholly erroneous notion that since the productions themselves have no value as literature, and since they neither add to the pupil's store of facts nor advance the frontiers of knowledge, they are waste of time. "Moral education consists in making the creature practically serviceable to other creatures: it is summed when the creature has been made to do its work with delight, and thoroughly." This is the social side. But he is also fond of quoting Wordsworth's line, "We live by admiration, hope and love," and he urges that a true education gives life a value for the liver. "All education is to make yourselves and your children capable of honesty and capable of delight."

Like all other prophetic messages, Ruskin's teaching is as leaven hid in three measures of meal. There is no likelihood of its having any visible or palpable effect upon society at large. The class which is now coming to the top will abuse its powers as grossly and vulgarly as the classes which it has displaced; and we may perhaps expect to find most virtue and courage and refinement among those who have been well called *les nouveaux pauvres*. But no earnest and eloquent voice uplifted in the cause of truth, beauty and goodness speaks in vain. It awakens a response in the hearts of many, and increases their store of faith, hope and love. Ruskin's Utopia exists only in the region of the ideals; but what are ideals but ideas struggling to realize themselves?

RUSKIN THE PROPHET

BY
THE RIGHT HON. C. F. G. MASTERMAN

RUSKIN THE PROPHET

IN being asked and responding with great pleasure to join in this general—if critical—tribute of praise to the Master, I want specially to concentrate attention on what I may call the "Prophetical Books." More and more as one gets older and re-reads those great utterances which once excited so much enthusiasm in our minds, I find that the prophetical books are the books that, certainly in my own experience, wear best. By the prophetical books I mean practically the writings of Ruskin that centre round what I think posterity will agree is far the greatest collection of his utterances and the most fruitful for examination, that is the series of letters from 1870 to 1883 collected under the title of *Fors Clavigera*.

I find some difficulty in going back to the old artistic writings. I become a little annoyed at the form in which they are presented, always ending up with eloquent perorations which somehow do not move as much to-day as they did yesterday. In what I may call the group dealing with political economy one has always the sense that he and his antagonists are fighting in totally different worlds. Directly he commenced to define wealth as life whereas they defined it as accumulation of money, there really is no connecting link between the one and the other; one is talking Euclid and the other the interpretation, if you like, of the Classical Literatures.

When I mention Ruskin as a prophet, of course I do not mean, in what we sometimes call the popular sense of the word, Ruskin as one who is interpreting the future; I mean Ruskin who is looking with extraordinary insight into the present. And the prophetical books, the examination, often

confused, unsatisfying, contradictory, of the condition of the civilization in which he found himself, somewhere approaching towards the latter years of the nineteenth century, both for the extraordinary beauty of their restrained style and for the indication of his power to penetrate below the surface and see the spiritual forces at work behind, seem to me likely to last as long as the English language endures. Once more, I cannot honestly accept the teaching of these prophetical utterances as entirely congruous with my own attempted solution of the problems of life. On re-examining them, as I have had the pleasure to do during the last few days for the purpose of this lecture, I can perhaps understand with rather greater sympathy than I felt at the time what I may call the "hedging" of my friend, Lord Bryce, at the Centenary celebration upon the social teaching of Ruskin—hedging which caused some of us some regret at the time. But although one accepts without hesitation much of the diagnosis, and though one recognizes without hesitation also that the effort at cure was animated, not always by reason, which was sometimes denied him, but always by a passionate desire to find a solution of the difficulties by which he was surrounded, one recognizes also, and it would be idle to deny it, that our position and his are as far as the poles asunder. "It speaks of Liberty," Ruskin says of a book that was sent to him, "under the common assumption of its desirableness; whereas my own teaching has been and is that Liberty, whether in the body, soul or political estate of men, is only another word for Death, and the final issue of death, putrefaction: the body, spirit and political estate being alike healthy only by their bonds and laws, and by Liberty being instantly disengaged into mephitic vapour." As I shall show in a minute, there are experiments now being conducted on a large scale and not without some success in Europe, in fulfilment of the ideals of St. George's Guild. And the only reason that I know why any severe controversy should be engaged with them is just because of that denial of liberty which no sooner appeared in any utterance of the day

in which Ruskin wrote than it was received with storms of abuse by the prophet of the time.

I said I would not speak of Ruskin as foreteller. That is not what I mean by a prophet. But still, even by that test—and it is sometimes taken as a test of the truth of prophetic utterance—we have an amazing amount of actual verifiable anticipation. He prophesied the end of the world, the end of the world as he knew it ; and to-day the end of the world has come, not so very many years after the time when he thought its destruction was assured. And the end of the world has come just as he anticipated, through the neglect of the things which he said were vital to human affairs and through the exaltation of things that he said were vicious in human affairs. We do not all know it has come. We shall know it, if we do not, in a short time. And we shall know it—when we do know it, and turn back to his revelation of a civilization fast hastening into decay—as being the inevitable result of the forces which he denounced and for which denunciation he was regarded as a madman by the people of his own time.

And he was right on lesser matters—not because he possessed any occult power of foretelling the future, but because he had the power of seeing in the present what the future must bring. He told the landlords of England (whom he loved to call the squires of England) that the time would come when they would either have to fight for their land or give up their land ; and not fight for their land against lawless seizure of it through armed mobs, but fight against legal seizure by the operation of the new franchises in Parliament. He put the date at 1880. He is perhaps forty years wrong, but forty years is not a long time in the history of a nation. He anticipated the coming of a new Labour movement, and he died not having seen the promises. The words which he wrote at that time—I think in 1873—are words which might have been written by Mr. Nevinson in any *Daily Herald* leading article yesterday. "Now, the ranks are gathering," he says, "on the one side of men rightly informed, and meaning to seek redress by lawful

and honourable means only ; and on the other of men capable of compassion, and open to reason, but with personal interests at stake so vast, and with all the gear and mechanism of their acts so involved in the web of past iniquity, that the best of them are helpless, and the wisest blind."

He had a speedy, and, as we now can see, a most satisfactory solution for the problem of the Grand Turk. He called in 1877 for the clear-cut and simple policy of throwing him into the Bosphorus. "If we hear a word more of atrocities in Bulgaria," he says, "after next week, let us blow his best palace into the Bosphorus." Well, the Grand Turk has given a great deal of trouble since. He is not yet in the Bosphorus, though I think most of the people in Europe wish he were. Still, no one knows what else to do with him—least of all himself.

He was asked to make a pronouncement in favour of the Land League of Ireland, which was regarded by all the responsible of his generation as something worse than the Bolshevists are regarded to-day, or the railway men were regarded yesterday. "I assume the purpose to be," he says, "that Ireland should belong to Irishmen : which is not only a most desirable but ultimately a quite inevitable condition of things—that being the assured intention of the Maker of Ireland and all other lands." Now, after being troubled with plagues worse than the plagues of Egypt for more than forty years since that "wild" utterance was announced, we find that Ruskin and the "Maker of all other lands" were right, and we were wrong.

He denounced taxes on food and drink in one of those large and spacious utterances that help us so much in the uncertainties of life. "All taxes put by the rich on the meat or drink of the poor are precise Devil's laws. That is why," he goes on, "they are so loud in their talk of national prosperity indicated by the Excise, because the fiend, who blinds them, sees that he can also blind you through your lust for drink, into quietly allowing yourselves to pay fifty

millions a year, that the rich may make their machines of blood with, and play at shedding blood."

He denounced the introduction of gain in the purchase of the necessities of life of the people, and he has seen his promise fulfilled in the Profiteering Act of 1919! although perhaps that Act does not go quite so far as those laws of Florence and of Venice which he was never tired of bringing before the British people, and whose only crime appears to be the extraordinary common sense with which they were inspired.

As to St. George's Guild—the great enthusiasm, and, as some people think, the great failure of his life—I believe that we are seeing now carried out under circumstances, I agree, of singular difficulty, in Eastern Europe, an attempt at the practical realization of the large principles which underlay that ideal of human condition. So far as I can learn, the whole apparatus of government in what is called Bolshevist Russia carries out almost in detail the ideals of St. George's Guild. You have the same contempt for democracy and liberty, and the same determination that the ordinary man must put himself absolutely under the control of those self-sacrificing leaders who are determined to direct him in the way that he should go. You have the same ideal of communist activity, and especially communist activity in land. You have the same high and almost austere ideal of the sacrifice of the whole citizens for the education of the coming generation. You have the same condemnation of the ordinary clumsy pleasures of the common people, gambling and drinking and the café, though as a matter of fact Ruskin did not go quite so far as Lenin, because he agreed that although a church should be at the end of every village, a good tavern should be at the other end, whereas, as we know, the austere Puritanism of Russia has suppressed the tavern and only barely acquiesced in the church. But you have there—if you remove your mind a bit from those towns which Ruskin so fiercely hated and which indeed in Russia are almost

entirely irrelevant—you have the same attempt to build up under a beneficent dictatorship an educated peasantry, enthusiastic for arts and crafts and for those elements in life which Ruskin thought made the difference between a man being a man or a beast, which he preached so passionately and preached in vain to the harder and less idealistic material of the English working classes. I think when the story is told, and if this great experiment emerges from its present difficulties and succeeds, you will find that Lenin and his ideal community owe less to Karl Marx than to John Ruskin.

Those are examples of where his prophecy has either succeeded, or where the failure of his prophecy has shown us that he was right and his opponents were wrong. Why did he not have a greater success in the country to which he specially appealed? I have one or two suggestions to offer for consideration.

The first is that I think he completely under-estimated the enormous strength and energy of that city civilization which he both hated and despised. Towards the end, a friend wrote to him from Manchester complaining that he had under-estimated "the elements of progress" in Manchester, and he replied shortly that what he advocated was not that the waters of Thirlmere should be brought to Manchester, but that Manchester should be sunk under the waters of Thirlmere. When we consider his attitude to the energy, virility, growing knowledge, compassion of the new working population, we find it is almost entirely derived from journeys carried out with a kind of disdainful disgust through these human centres (as he thought them) of human misery. He passes through Oxford to Italy, from Italy to Brantwood. He never got inside, and therefore used, as I think every one now would agree, the most exaggerated language; he never got inside the life of the city, and never realized that no future was possible by trying to destroy that city life and distribute the people once again in agricultural communities upon the land. I cannot help thinking that if

he had really understood, and not merely taken the estimates of kind, beneficent, old-fashioned Tory ladies about the horrible condition of the mining or the factory districts, but gone down into them and found out after all how much better they were, for instance, in many vital respects than ancient Italy or modern Oxford, he could then have turned his attention to a more fruitful method of proclaiming truth to his generation.

And then I think another reason why Ruskin failed was an also extraordinary over-estimate of the possibilities of agriculture in this dismal, wind-swept northern isle of ours. He comes to it again and again, in letter after letter. His whole ideal seems to be that if you could get people on the land, working at agriculture and living a beneficent life more or less in exotic fashion, with education in all the high and noble fruits of the past, you could produce not only an admirably contented but also an economically satisfactory condition. His vision was largely the same as that most fascinating vision of William Morris in *News from Nowhere*, where the people go up the river in order to join in the hay-making ; and where the life of the peasant seems as if it might be one everlasting hay-making in a never-rainy June. We now know how very far this is from the truth. We now know that the life of the peasant here is necessarily a life of almost unendurable toil, degrading, with no opportunity given either for economic success or for the culture of body, mind and spirit ; and that the only hope of removing—in this country at least—the country life from such conditions is just by the profuse use of that very machinery which Ruskin altogether condemned and despised.

I cannot help feeling that his prophetic teaching at this time is vitiated by his extraordinarily ambiguous attitude towards war. Again and again he is denouncing the British people for spending the money they ought to spend on a decent life in paying the armament makers for heaping up the implements of destruction. But, whenever a war takes place, Ruskin is cheering on the combatants, and in

every illustration he gives, he goes back to the old stories of chivalrous fighting—certainly the fighting in which the knights entertained themselves at the top and were noble to their captives, but gave very little attention to the cannon fodder at the bottom of the scale. In one of the best-known letters of *Fors* he devotes his whole attention to a contrast. He takes a harmless little Venetian Cockney out for a day, first committing the crime of embarking on a steamboat over the Lido—a crime of which we have been often guilty; second, enjoying artificial gardens made on the Lido which ought to have been left romantic and wild; and third, spending the evening in listening to the dismal melodies of Gounod's "Faust." He contrasts this modern Venetian with his ideal of what a Venetian ought to be. And the ideal is that of the fourth Crusade, the most indefensible, piratical expedition ever undertaken by any nation in the history of the world; in which the European Christians were by the cunning of the Venetians persuaded into attacking the Eastern Empire at Constantinople, and through which ingenious advice of a nation of combined merchants and pirates Christendom was ultimately overthrown and Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turk. The child in Ruskin—and after all he was a genius and a child—loved the adventure and the panoply of war. Again and again he returns from what he regards as the sordid transactions of the market-place to show in some carving of cathedral or stained-glass window how all the ideals of the best minds in all times have been associated with the vision of life as a conflict. Therefore I cannot feel that in a time when his great influence and the influence of his successors might have been used to avert the destruction of a civilization, I cannot feel that those who admire him profoundly and who are humble disciples of him like myself, can altogether deny that this great prophet to his generation did not in some sense betray the cause of humanity.

Now let me have the more pleasant task of turning from these criticisms to frank and wholehearted praise.

What a horrible England it was to which he preached in those years towards the end of the nineteenth century. And what a ghastly act of phantom figures of persons of importance in their day only remain for the memory of future time because they are pilloried in the pages of his writings ! The complacent and self-satisfied bishops ! The truculent and obstinate editors ! The attempts of such persons as the Rev. James M'Cosh to justify the ways of God to man ! The slosh and nonsense which was used to bolster up a system which every honest man could see was indefensible. Possibly these things still go on : bishops are as complacent, editors are as obstinate and dogmatic, and there is always a James M'Cosh to cheer and torment every age. But somehow they seem to be more irrelevant to the present time. They do not weigh so heavily on mankind. And if they do not weigh so heavily on mankind it is because of the work done by many, but work in which Ruskin was the pioneer. The nonsense that was talked in order to keep the poor contented ! One great American Chamber of Commerce solemnly issuing the statement that the spending of money by the great American millionaires was to be thoroughly commended because it gave work for the working-men ; the *Daily News* proclaiming that the increase in the price of coal was a signal sign of our national prosperity ; Mr. John Bright explaining that the testing of weights and measures in order to see whether they were honest or dishonest was a violation of the fundamental liberty of the subject ; and the *Daily Telegraph* announcing with a pleasant air that " it was one of the many delusions of the Commune that it could live without rich customers." And Mr. Greg and other ephemera explaining to the entire satisfaction of the governing classes of England that the money they spent on cigars and champagne in no way interfered with and in no way increased the misery of the poor at the bottom of the scale of civilization. If such slop and nonsense can no more be permitted in circles that call themselves civilized, we owe it in the main to the courage

of this man, who flouted and defied the idols of the cave in which he was reared.

And then, how much still and as long as present inequality endures does that triumphant challenge ring out which made all the sane minds of the England to which he was preaching come to the conviction that he was indubitably mad. Take, for example, one of the most famous of all the passages of *Fors*—those who are familiar with it will not mind my referring to it again—the contrast between the pictures in the illustrated papers of what was happening on the one side of the water and what was happening on the other, at the time of the suppression of the Commune here. "All the fine ladies," he says, "at the Queen's Concert, sitting so trimly, and looking so sweet and doing the whole duty of women—wearing their fine clothes gracefully: and the pretty singer, white-throated, warbling 'Home, Sweet Home' to them, so morally and melodiously! Our Kingdom of Heaven is come again with observation, and crown diamonds of the dazzlingest." And there, "Vulgar Hell shall be didactically portrayed—wickedness going its way to its poor home—bitter-sweet. Ouvrier and petroleuse—prisoners at last—glaring wild on their way to die." Then follows his famous lament and exaltation over the Communist prisoners: "Ouvrier and petroleuse; they are gone their way; to their death. But for these, the Virgin of France shall yet unfold her oriflame above their grave, and lay her white lilies on their dust. Yea, and for these, great Charles shall rouse his Roland, and bid him put ghostly trump to lip, and breathe a point of war; and the helmed Pucelle shall answer with a wood-note of Donremy; yea, and for these that Louis whom they mocked, as his Master, shall raise his holy hands, and pray God's peace."

It is as if to-day such a challenge was issued to a new paper which showed on the one side the crowds gathering to see, say, an Automobile Show; on the other side, the pictorial representation of a recent fight in Russia, in which it is claimed

that "only twenty-seven Bolshevik commissioners were put to death." And if you interpret the kind of fury that such a contrast would arouse in such a lament at the present time in the popular press of England, you can understand something of the courage with which Ruskin faced such a contrast in the generation in which he lived. And over the contrast, of course, is the lesson of it all. "Alas! of these divided races, of whom one was appointed to teach and guide the other, which has indeed sinned deepest—the unteaching or the untaught? Which are now guiltiest—those who perish, or those who—forget?" The challenge remains as true to-day, after all the changes of fifty amazing years.

Then I am not sure again whether one is entirely on his side or without some pleading for mercy when he passes from the indifference of the wealthier classes and those who had the teaching and leadership of the people of England in the hollow of their hands for two hundred years, to the fierce condemnation of that eruption of suburban life which was developing in the age in which he lived. He could see nothing good in it. He struck at it with all the force of a man who can command sentences destined, and deliberately destined, to hurt and to wound. Looking at the development since, I think perhaps he did not sufficiently understand in denouncing it, in what, as a matter of fact, desperate situation these people were living. "That same district," he says of the region which he once knew as full of farms and country houses between Camberwell and Croydon, "that same district is now covered by, literally, many thousands of houses built within the last ten years of rotten brick, with various iron devices to hold it together." He describes these "desirable residences" of the jerry-builder as "fastened in a Siamese twin manner together by their sides, and each couple has a Greek or Gothic portico shared between them, with magnificent steps and highly ornamented capitals." He goes on to give some rather severe generalizations of the condition of life in these astonishing districts. "Of the men, their wives and children,

who live in any of these houses, probably not the fifth part are possessed of one common manly or womanly skill, knowledge, or means of happiness. The men can indeed write, and cast accounts and go to town every day to get their living by doing so: the women and children can perhaps read story books, dance in a vulgar manner and play on the piano with dull dexteries for exhibition. They never think of taking a walk, and the road for six miles round them being ankle deep in mud and flints, they could not if they would. They cannot enjoy their gardens, for they have neither sense enough nor strength enough to walk in them." And he sees nothing but ruin in face of such a civilization "that thus could build."

Well, I think we might say a word of friendliness for the suburban population of this country, especially as apparently they are so soon to be extinguished. I do not know whether it would encourage him now if he found most of the young men going out on the motor-cycle instead of taking a walk, and most of the young women reading Ruskin's more intelligible utterances and feeling a vague satisfaction in such passages as the end of *Sesame and Lilies*; but I do think that he did not there sufficiently understand that in the attempt of a sorely tried and harassed people to find something in the nature of a home redeemed from the squalor of the surrounding industrial population on the one side, but not particularly ambitious of the luxury of the wealthy population on the other, you had the attempt of two people which beyond all others offered a hope for the future development of gentle and civilized life in this country. However, he would have none of them. He looked on them from outside. He saw them attending the popular theatres and the Royal Academy exhibitions. And the more they endeavoured thus to equip themselves with knowledge of "literature" and "art," the fiercer became his denunciation against them.

He shared the fate of the prophet. He moved as the one man who had eyes in the country of the blind, and the one

desire of the blind men was to reduce him to a condition similar to their own. He was not limited, as the majority of those with whom he fought were limited, by just the survey of the immediate surroundings in the time and place in which they lived. He looked across the centuries, saw cities rise and fall, forms of civilization organized by man remote and different from the civilization of Westmorland, or Wakefield, or Westminster ; and he refused to believe that this particular, and as he thought, wrong direction taken by a certain section of the human race, who, all the while that they were marching to ruin, were crowning themselves with flowers and hailing themselves as immortal, was the last word in the dealings of God with man. More and more he became exasperated and dissatisfied at the failure to respond to his teaching. More and more, as he seemed to think, not only was his own voice failing in responsibility, but everything was failing which might lead his people into a better course of affairs. "It becomes every hour more urged upon me," he wrote towards the end, "that I shall have to leave—not father and mother, for they have left me : not children, nor lands, for I have none—but at least this spiritual land and fair domain of human art and natural peace in Italy—because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and therefore am undone, because mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

If you want in a sentence to sum up all this wonderful story of the travail through a whole decade of a man, entirely and unselfishly and disinterestedly preaching what he thought were the things which belonged to the peace of his nation, though it brought him no return, I think you can sum it up in that declaration. "His eyes had seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. He had seen the people round him like the man with the muckrake in the parable, with every kind of glory, and beauty, and nobility of life offered them freely, still with heads averted, raking together the sticks, and the small stones, and the dust of the floor. He saw the possibility of gentleness,

and courage, and compassion torn to pieces and lost in the mad struggle partly for wealth and partly for mere existence in a society which was less a civilization than a sham. He proclaimed it, and in proclaiming it, he gave everything that a man can give. Let us not in our turn refuse to do him honour.

JOHN RUSKIN

BY

LAURENCE BINYON

JOHN RUSKIN

I

NAPOLEON was still watching the horizon from remote St. Helena, brooding over his quarter-of-a-century's unmatched experience, when John Ruskin was born in a sedate street in Bloomsbury, on February 8, 1819. Was it perhaps in this very year that the great exile, scanning one day the sea-line, observed—so some one has recorded—a smoke in the offing, and from the reply to his quick question learnt that it was a ship propelled by steam? After all, then, if he had not listened to his *savants*, who, after their manner, had pronounced steamships to be impossible, he might have laughed at the obstinate winds which had kept him at Boulogne, and pounced on England in the night! The vision of conquest flared up in Napoleon's imagination, and died down in bitter thoughts. That was what the smoke on the horizon meant to him. But it was such an apparition as might have haunted Ruskin all his life—the small black cloud in the distance, which meant the coming of the Age of Steam. To him it was a presage of miasma overspreading Europe; it portended not only things he abhorred and lamented—the pollution of pure streams, the desecration of lovely valleys, the decay of husbandry, the desertion of the country-side, the coagulation of people in huge sooty towns overshadowed by monstrous factories—it portended also things that, consequent on these, moved him even more deeply and wrung from him burning speech—poisonings of the heart and mind, the degradation of art, the

apotheosis of commerce, the material glut and spiritual famine of industrial England.

But it was only by degrees that the stark vision of the Dragon was revealed, against which, a new St. George, he was destined to go forth and fight, and to spend his strength and substance fighting. The Dragon was to grow up with him ; its force was not full grown till his own powers were ripened and his weapon sharpened for the unending contest. The era of world-shaking events, of war-convulsed Europe, of feverish action and dazzling campaigns, had closed abruptly on the field of Waterloo. With the eclipse of Napoleon came deaths like those of Byron, Keats and Shelley, as if to symbolize the passing of the glory of youth. The world went drab. Exhausted by her immense struggle, England withdrew into herself, concentrating energy on industry and invention. If for long there was misery and want among the people, manufacturers grew rich ; railways were developed at a burst ; the resources of the country exploited as never before. England was gradually entering on a period of material prosperity unparalleled. These were the times in which Ruskin grew to manhood.

Why does the early Victorian era seem so queerly remote to us now ? Why is it that we seem more at home in the eighteenth century, and in other periods much more removed in time ? To take externals only : though crinolines and flowing whiskers may begin to take on a charm of distance, we cannot conceive ourselves happy with Victorian furniture ; yet we copy and covet the interiors of Reynolds's and Johnson's time. But in the mental atmosphere, too, we feel, after the age that went before, a loss of breadth and naturalness and frankness ; the horizon is contracted ; England seems to have lost touch with the outer world of Europe ; and never were the arts of a great nation in so degraded a condition. Miseries and horrors underlay the glitter of new wealth, with its ingrained complacency. Yet, in spite of all the smugness and accepted vulgarity, never was an age more

resolutely indicted by its great men, or by some at least among them. And of these the most eloquent was Ruskin. His protest lasts; we have need of it to-day.

None of the eminent Victorians won fame and recognition earlier than Ruskin. He fascinated an immense audience. but there were vicissitudes in his fame. *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice* irritated the circle of old-fashioned cognoscenti and scandalized the professional architects; but they took the reading world by storm; and before long Ruskin's teaching, revolutionary in many respects as it seemed, was soaking into the minds of young enthusiasts; it bore practical fruit, as we know, in painting, and still more in architecture. For a period he was accepted as an oracle on all matters of art. Then began the series of books on social reform and political economy; and now it was the political economists who were scandalized in their turn. "Of course, as a writer on art he is magnificent; let him stick to what he knows; of our science he knows nothing and talks folly." Thus said the economists. But it so happened that by this time a change had come over the world of art: Ruskin was voted old-fashioned and out-of-date, his authority had declined, and soon it was the artists and art critics who were saying, "Of course, as a political economist he is splendid; but no one could accept his teaching about art." And since his death there have been symptoms of a tendency, here and there, to regard Ruskin as a man who, so far as the substance of his message went, had fallen between two stools; though his reputation could still be saved, for no one could deny that he was a great writer. But mere eloquence will save no man. It is impossible to disengage Ruskin's eloquence and the felicities of his style from the matter that moved him to write. And more and more it will be perceived that the doctrine he uttered, the faith that inspired him, was of a single substance, whether his subject was rocks and plants, or painting and architecture, or housing and wages, or religion and ethics. He was driving all one way. What he had to say about

political economy was the same as what he had to say about art; the one was implied in the other. He was something more than a critic of art, more than a naturalist, more than a political economist; he was an inspired interpreter of life and the beauty of life, he was a vindicator of human needs and human joy.

II

Ruskin's strange and solitary boyhood had a lasting influence on his life. It was singularly shielded. An only child, we see him first in his Bloomsbury nursery absorbed in the colours of the carpet or in the operations of the turncock in the street and the occasional splendid spouting of white water from the main. Then it is in the garden at Herne Hill, where the household had moved when he was four, making friends with birds and flowers. He has no playfellows. Every morning his mother and he read the Bible together; they begin with the first chapter of Genesis, and omit no verse till they have reached the last of the Apocalypse; and as soon as they have finished they begin again. No wonder that his thought, like his style, is saturated with the Authorized Version. Quite early he begins to write and to draw, and be busy with his "Works." His parents see him a bishop, surpassing all other bishops in distinction. But his father has set his heart on his being a poet too—"another Byron, only pious." The elder Ruskin, a type not so infrequent among Englishmen, though practical and hard-headed in his business, nourishes a private passion for romance, and worships art and poetry with a real and innocent reverence. Picture this Puritan household of three at dessert, while the father reads aloud "Don Juan" to the rapt and eager child, exchanging nervous glances with his wife, yet hardly knowing how to stop in his enthusiasm. The boy has his little niche by the chimney-piece, and we see him perched before his table, reading, writing, drawing, or intent upon some veined and coloured stone; for geology is already a passion. But he is always solitary.

Yet happy in his way; for though the "gloom and terror" of Sunday cast their shadow before, he has much time to himself, and a busy mind to occupy. His parents are always there, weaving who knows what unbounded dreams about him; but his real life is apart; he is happiest quite alone with flowers and clouds, and light, and running water. And soon the mountains. For even as a small child he was to be taken on wonderful journeys through the length and breadth of Britain. His father chose to be his own traveller for the selling of his fine sherries, and every summer drove in a leisurely carriage with wife and son, prolonging each tour for some weeks to visit one picturesque region or another. And if there was a fine picture to be seen in any mansion by the way, be sure he took his boy to see it. Before long, Britain was exchanged for the Continent. At fifteen Ruskin had his first sight of the Alps from Schaffhausen, and felt himself a dedicated spirit. If his education, according to university notions, was meagre and incomplete, how richly educative were these annual journeys to his impressible senses and ever-working mind! Journeys made within the life-time of some yet living, they seem from that very cause almost legendary now. How royal a fashion of travelling it was, in the great roomy carriage, fitted with every ingenious device for comfort, drawn by four horses, and stopping towards sunset always at the best of inns, where the best of rooms, the choicest of meals and wine, awaited the travellers. No wonder that Ruskin had no stomach for the hurry and grime and promiscuity of the railway. Who would, after his experience?

Such was Ruskin's boyhood. He had already written much verse and some remarkable things in prose before he went to Christ Church. But he was not destined to be a poet—he had no creative instinct—nor a bishop either, though he carried far into manhood the fervent literal faith of his evangelical training; in middle life it painfully failed him. He ought, with such an upbringing, to have been a molly-coddle and a prig. He never rubbed against his fellows;

his spirits were allowed no physical outlet. He was afterwards to note and deplore in himself a "dangerous and lonely pride." There is something tragic in this father and mother, with their morbid fond solicitude, seeking to maintain the parental tie with a tutelary closeness long after their son was a famous man and when, in thought, he had gone beyond them. He lived with them for many long years after he was grown up, and they watched over his every movement; were jealous of new friends; wished to keep him in their own groove; luxuriated in his fame, but when his opinions provoked and braved unpopularity sought to stop him and could not understand him; would have given their lives for him, yet were "cruelly hurtful without knowing it." On the other hand, the peculiar conditions of his boyhood were in some ways peculiarly fitted for the work he was to do. Unlike many men of genius, he had no hard and rough experience of youth. He was bred strictly, yet with a choice luxury in his surroundings. And with his extreme sensitiveness to beauty, combined with what by no means universally accompanies it, an exquisite faculty of precise observation and acute powers of reasoning, what luck and opportunity were his! Much travel had given him a sense of Europe and of history, besides storing his mind with vivid impressions; without that he could not have perceived so poignantly the ignobleness of industrial England, and, in especial, its private sumptuousness contrasted with its public meanness. Shielded from the world, he brought with him a noble innocence when he encountered its realities and miseries—an innocence not of a temper to be dismayed and defeated by horrible fact, but fiery and courageous. In some ways he reminds us of Shelley, who yet was so different. Ruskin noted in himself as un-English a fastidious repulsion from the gross relish of life which is in Chaucer and Shakespeare and Fielding and Hogarth. In this he was like Shelley; neither enjoyed human nature for its own sake, though Ruskin had the more of humour; both were intense in all things, fervent and

serious in their efforts to reform the world ; both melodiously eloquent, though the one hymned Liberty and the other railed against her ; but rarest of all was this they had in common, that they lived out what they believed and, having wealth, gave all they had for their fellow-men. Each at the sight of wrong flamed in spontaneous indignation. It was black wrath at the critics' abuse of Turner which drove Ruskin to write *Modern Painters* and made him famous at a bound. It was indignation that in the end was to consume and destroy him.

III

Ruskin was just twenty-four when the first volume of *Modern Painters* appeared. It was an astonishing book for so young a man to have written. The wonder of it was not so much the sustained and coloured eloquence, nor the audacity with which universally accepted reputations were attacked : it was rather the richness of mind, the confidence of knowledge, the continual evidence of precise observation, the acuteness of the reasoning. The succeeding volumes were published at intervals during a period of seventeen years (in which the author found time to write *The Stones of Venice* and the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*) ; and as the book grew, its scope widened. It suffers from the manner of its composition ; it lacks unity ; it is not always consistent. Yet it remains the book by which Ruskin is best known, as it was the book which made him famous. There is a general opinion abroad that in the matter of art criticism we have got beyond Ruskin : he is no longer appealed to as an authority. Among artists especially he is discredited. There are several reasons for this reaction. One is the very voluminousness of Ruskin's writings. He is known by extracts, chosen usually for the beauty of the prose rather than read with continuous attention to the argument. By isolating passages from their context, Ruskin may be made to appear to hold all sorts of contradictory

opinions. Again, you may dip into him in an unfortunate mood or moment and be merely irritated by emphatic dogmatism and preaching tone ; by fanciful theories, petulance, discursiveness. You may be wearied by the sonorous flourishes with which every paragraph seems to close. And then, with happier chance, you take him up and find yourself astonished by the fullness of his mind, the fresh illumination he casts upon his theme, the trains of thought he suggests, the charm of his phrasing. Unfortunately for his fame, he is remembered, among those who do not trouble to read his works, by his judgments of particular artists : his scorn of Constable, for instance, as a third-rate painter ; his blindness to the greatness of a genius like Rembrandt's ; and, on the other hand, his lavish praise of insignificant water-colour painters who appealed to him. Perhaps what turned artists in general against him was the Whistler law-suit in 1878, when he appeared as an obtuse opposer of the new gospel of impressionism, the movement which, at the moment, had most vitality behind it and was capturing the youthful generation. Yet there was no reason, except age and wilfulness, why Ruskin should not have appreciated Whistler's work. It is quite untrue to suppose that he was intolerant of any but pre-Raphaelite methods of minute detail. It was many years before his eyes were opened to Botticelli, yet Tintoretto took him by storm. Another common notion about his criticism is that he only cared about pictures for their literary interest (as the phrase goes), and always required a moral. This is not true either, though there is some colour of foundation for such charges. What, then, is the real truth about Ruskin's views on art, and how far do they stand the test of time ?

First, it may be said that, as regards particular artists, that perfervid spirit was no safe or balanced judge. Prejudice and caprice came too easily to him. But the greatest of critics have often been wrong in their particular judgments. It is rather by their power of illumination, by their grasp of general ideas, that we acknowledge their greatness. Ruskin causes

difficulty by his love of paradox, and by his way of throwing out emphatic statements which, taken from their context, seem entirely to contradict other statements of his. Yet his main position is clear. People who care about art are divided into those who isolate it, as the heritage of the chosen few, and those who relate it always to human life. The first see how very few are those who really appreciate fine art, and they cherish their superiority to the "outsider"; the others hope and want to make their fellow-men share in their own delight. Of these last was Ruskin. He was not blind to the rarity of real appreciation; he saw that present conditions made it inevitable; and therefore he wanted to change those conditions, and was led on to see what practical steps could be taken to alter things at the root. So his hopes for art led him straight to the attack on political economy as then conceived. Ruskin always related art to life. Take one out of a hundred passages:—

"Among the first habits that a young architect should learn is that of thinking in shadow, not looking at a design in its miserable liny skeleton; but conceiving it as it will be when the dawn lights it and the dusk leaves it; when its stones will be hot, and its crannies cool; when the lizards will bask on the one, and the birds build on the other. Let him design with the sense of cold and heat upon him; let him cut out the shadows, as men dig wells in unwatered plains; and lead along the lights, as a founder does his hot metal; let him keep the full command of both, and see that he knows how they fall, and where they fade."

There must be, he has been saying, "in this magnificently human art of architecture, some equivalent expression for the trouble and wrath of life, for its sorrow and its mystery . . . mighty masses of shadow mingled with its surface." He demands that art should be expressive of man's spirit, and speak to men, and stir them by its noble language. But how

does it speak to them, how stir them? Let us hear him now on painting :—

"Take any noble musical air, and you find, on examining it, that not one even of its faintest or shortest notes can be removed without destruction to the whole passage in which it occurs ; and that every note in the passage is twenty times more beautiful so introduced than it would have been if played singly on the instrument. Precisely this degree of arrangement and relation must exist between every touch and line in a great picture. You must consider the whole as a prolonged musical composition."

The same analogy with music was developed by Pater in a celebrated essay which has set the fashion for a score of writers since. And Whistler, as we know, called his pictures symphonies to head off the public from any interest they might try to find in their "subject." But Ruskin's name is associated with a quite different view of painting ; and it is true that this is not his conception of what great painting primarily is. We have quoted this passage (and it is not an isolated one) to emphasize the fact that Ruskin regarded beauty of design as absolutely essential to a great picture. He admits that you can have art which is merely design without representation. He asserts, rightly, that great art always combines design with truth of nature. But deliberately he puts truth first, design second. The history of art in Europe may appear to support this view. Yet fundamentally it is wrong ; for good design of whatever sort is always art, whereas truth of representation need not be art at all. Ruskin's own gift and temperament, and his scientific interests, inevitably led him to dwell with special delight on the painting of natural fact. He owned to being weak in designing power ; it was this which prevented him, exquisite draughtsman and colourist as he was, from attaining real rank as an artist. He was not creative. On the other hand, he had extraordinary powers of analysis. Mazzini said of him that he had the most

analytic mind in Europe; and Ruskin in *Præterita* quotes the saying with complacency. In describing pictures he was not happy till he had dragged out everything into the full daylight of conscious intelligence; that was his own domain; he tended to ignore what we now call the subconscious element, both in the artist and in the spectator. Yet this element is really the most potent in both. He thought rightness of motive was everything; the artist should work "for the glory of God." Perhaps, after all, one cannot better that description of the true artist's spirit of work; yet if he begins to be conscious of a motive, even the highest, beyond his work, he is in danger of losing all.

Into a great work the master pours his whole being. We recognize the greatness as we recognize it in a human personality; it is by a presence, and by the mood that presence evokes in us, rather than by anything we can explain or set down in words. It is not sensuous only, or emotional, or intellectual, or spiritual; yet the impression by which we are moved, exhilarated, liberated, contains something of all these factors; and if any of them is missing in some degree we miss it too. The plain truth is that when we begin to try to follow in language the true effect of a great work of art on ourselves, language fails us at the outset. Who knows how a work of art is born? Perhaps the masterpiece uses the artist, as Samuel Butler said the egg uses the hen, as a means of getting into the world. Certainly it brings with it a life of its own, a life that enhances ours by the promise and evocation of a life freer, fuller, richer, more intense than we can realize in our own existence. And it moves us mysteriously, in the depths, even though it may appear to have no meaning, still less an explicit "message." Are we then to say that a great painting is a great design with beautifully inter-related line and mass and colour, and dismiss all other values as irrelevant? But that is to cut it off from the deep human sources whence it sprang. For, after all, mere design is expressive. The shape of a vase, the pattern of a wall-

paper, can be noble or mean. We instinctively use such terms, and by using them recognize that what we call the moral side of our nature is affected; though as soon as we isolate or stress the "moral" element (or the technical either) we feel as if we had torn something from the fibre in which it lived. Ruskin from first to last emphasized moral values in art; and this antagonized many. But is it not the word rather than the meaning? The word has acquired a tame and joyless atmosphere; to artists it is apt to suggest merely the conventions of respectability; prudish, self-righteous and hypocritical people. How far was all that from Ruskin's mind! How disconcerting was his rebuff to the shocked admirer who besought him publicly to reprobate Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*! No, he was revaluing the whole notion of morality. He scouted the delusion that art can make people good; but he avowed his faith that sterling work of art, as art, must spring from sterling worth in the soul that produced it; and to a public inclined to suspect all art as an inessential luxury, enervating on the whole in its effect, he proclaimed that "little else but art is moral . . . and for the words 'good' and 'wicked' used of men, you may almost substitute 'makers' or 'destroyers.'" There is Ruskin's true touch of power, his vivid beam of illumination. He may seem to artists to talk too much "in the air"; he may not wholly satisfy the philosophic critic; but in his broad appeal to men, in his passionate endeavours to persuade them of the living power of art as a natural function and a natural joy, how great he is, and how enduring his words! No one before him had so gone down to the roots. He was the first to see behind the work the workman at his toil, and to make it a test of art that it should flower from the workman's happiness. In that chapter of *The Stones of Venice* in which this condition is laid down, the chapter that was to be an inspiration to William Morris, how many things are said which still read fresh and pregnant! The recognition that all great art is imperfect, that imperfection is the condition of all that is not

dead ; the admittance of the unskilful craftsman, so long as his mind is given free expression ; these are ideas that are germinating in the younger generation now. And though we may not think that thirteenth-century Gothic is the only architecture to use (and how Ruskin hated the buildings his teaching, literally taken, produced !), we can see well enough why it inspired him ; it was so richly expressive of the minds that made it ; and is our architectural ornament expressive of anything but penury of imagination ? Shall we never invent motives of decoration that are really related to the things we ourselves desire and delight in ?

It has no doubt been pointed out that in one direction Ruskin's true herald and forerunner was William Blake. To Blake, Gothic was the only architecture which lived ; and as Ruskin said that little else but art was moral, so Blake said that no one but an artist can be a Christian. And Blake's central thought is reaffirmed by Ruskin, only that the one speaks in terms of morality, the other of religion. "To *subdue* the passions, which is thought so often to be the sum of duty respecting them, is possible only to a proud dullness ; but to *excite* them rightly, and make them strong for good, is the work of the unselfish imagination." In truth, the writer of *Unto this Last* might have taken for his life's motto Blake's famous lines :—

> I will not cease from mental fight,
> Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
> Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant land.

On one side, of course, Blake was worlds away from Ruskin. Nature "put him out" ; whereas Ruskin had a passion for natural fact and an adoration for natural beauty. And all through his writing on art this passion is continually bursting forth and flooding his pages, so that often he seems to lose sight of the root concern of art in design, and to write as if an

exquisite illustration of natural truth were all that mattered. Yet here again he has been misunderstood. He was not opposed to convention, or exigent of complete representation. The test of fine convention was whether it was faithful to organic growth and structure; it could stop far short of nature, indicate or symbolize it, and yet be finely true.

IV

"This book has given me eyes," cried Charlotte Brontë; and many a reader of *Modern Painters* must have felt as she did. When Ruskin came to write of social and political ideas, it was the same gift of sight which he brought. Like the child in Hans Andersen's story, who saw what every one pretended to ignore, he refused to be intimidated by custom, or the authority of the experts, and wrote his own quick feelings. His thought ploughed fresh furrows in the field of accepted opinions. Inhuman things were permitted by mid-nineteenth century England in its mines and factories, things scarce credible to us now; yet may not a future generation stare at the record of things we permit? "Human nature is kind and generous," wrote Ruskin, "but it is narrow and blind; and can only with difficulty conceive anything but what it immediately perceives." To rouse men from dull acceptance of cruelty and waste by showing them a vision of what life can be; this was now his aim, just as in his earlier books he had shown them what wonders and treasuries of joy lay for every man and woman in the mere faculty of sight. "*There is no wealth but life;* life, including all its powers of love, of joy, of admiration." Such sayings as that were startling paradoxes to a time that believed in letting the great machine of competition grind its own way, no matter what human lives it ground to dust, because it ground out money. Respectable society was outraged. Ruskin's first series of papers raised such a storm that the *Cornhill*, frightened, discontinued them. The same fate befell the second series

in *Fraser's*. But Ruskin all the more persisted in his unorthodoxy; and, ever since, the stream of his thought has been filtering into, and fertilizing, the mind of England. Others had appealed to men's conscience or to their pity, on behalf of the helpless and oppressed, or had sought to rouse the millions of those others to avenge their wrongs and assert their rights by force. Ruskin appealed to men's imagination, without which there is no understanding; imagination, the capital lack of politicians and of agitators. Only by the saving power of imagination can we see the life of the nation as a whole, and feel, as if by our own experience, the existence we allow our fellow-beings in our own country to endure. Just as he had brought men to study art at its root, "in human hope and human passion," Ruskin now besought them to study political economy in life itself, to make a revaluation of customs, systems, institutions, in terms of human worth. "Industry without art is brutality"; but how can art be where there is neither leisure, nor hope, nor opportunity for tasting or fostering the innocent delights of the senses? So, to professional artists, absorbed in questions of fashion in technique, he proclaimed that the first necessity for England's art, if it was to be her self-expression as a nation, was to make her "country clean and her people beautiful." The housing of the workers was art's concern, for him. Religion's also. And people who shut up their religion in church were bidden "look forward to a time when in English villages there may be a God's acre tenanted by the living, not the dead; and when we shall rather look with aversion and fear to the remnant of ground that is set apart as profane, than with reverence to a narrow portion of it enclosed as holy." Again we seem to hear the voice of Blake crying out of the distance, "Everything that *lives* is holy!"

No doubt there are fallacies in Ruskin's political economy considered as a science, just as there are dubious inferences and generalizations in his interpretations of national art and character. Yet the strong drift of him is towards the light,

towards living and fruit-bearing truth. He never thinks without feeling, nor feels without imagination. An old man, "always impatient and often tired," he laboured on, spending all his strength and all his fortune for the England of his dreams. But now he was become one

> Of those to whom the miseries of the world
> Are misery, and will not let them rest.

He was tortured by the vision of what was, yet more by the rejection of his vision of what could be. He had been used to authority: he grew more and more the prey of irritations. His prose, which in youth had rolled and reverberated through melodious and ornate periods, saved from verbiage by its innate precision, had been chastened to a more incisive plainness in *Unto this Last*, the book its author cherished most, both for thoughts and style; it now became wilful, apt to wander, frequent in fits of peevish outburst. Yet in *Præterita*, though it was written after the "brainstorms" had begun, he was taken back to happier days, and the style wins a serenity and ease we find in no other of his books. There is a kind of evening light on its pages. But the light was going, and soon was gone.

Ruskin is one of those whose spirit lives beyond their books, and works in the minds of men who never read them and perhaps never heard his name. A hundred years after his birth, as we turn to him again, how often shall we not find the hopes a time of vast upheaval has set stirring uttered in his pages, and hear him pleading for the truth of human values in the whole scale of life against the public meanness, married to blind waste, and the indifference to things of the mind, and the contempt of beauty, and the stunting of emotion and imagination, that we have tolerated so long. England is infinitely richer in gift, in resource and productiveness of mind than she lets herself seem to be, because she has allowed stupidity to have power to prevent the blood of life from

circulating through her limbs. That was Ruskin's faith : and in the enlargement of our vision to see things in their true relations, in the animation of our hearts to express our hope and passion, who shall measure the influence of that burning, tender, indignant and deep-seeing spirit ?

RUSKIN AS POLITICAL ECONOMIST

BY

J. A. HOBSON

RUSKIN AS POLITICAL ECONOMIST

THERE is something humorous as well as pathetic in the contempt with which Ruskin's claim to be a teacher of the Science and the Art of Political Economy was received by the orthodox exponents of that subject during his life-time. They were the accredited practitioners; he a mere quack, an unqualified interloper. University professors, statesmen, bankers, even cotton spinners or ironmasters, had some right to pronounce with authority upon grave issues affecting the wealth of nations. But what could an art critic, a literary dilettante, know about the business world? To the academic, as to the business man, it never seems to have occurred that wealth is primarily a quality, not a quantity, and that the understanding or appreciation of that quality demanded qualifications which Ruskin had, and they had not. How should it have occurred to them? Political economy, in this country, as soon as it emerged from the more liberal treatment of Adam Smith, underwent a narrowing and degrading process. It became the bondslave of the rising manufacturing and trading classes, who needed it to work their intellectual mill, just as they needed an abundant supply of cheap labour to work their textile and flour mills. The object of the Political Economy, moulded under the pressure of these interests, was to build up a theory to support the current capitalist control of industry with its demand for increased quantity of output, expanding markets and abounding profits. Minute division of labour, unfettered competition, complete liberty of contract, such was the chief conditions for the maximum production of wealth, towards which, as its final end, the formulas and

method of economic science were directed. This quantitative conception of the wealth of nations, and the monetary measure applied to estimate it, were the core of the indictment to which Ruskin devoted a large part of his intellectual and moral energy. This crusade carried him into two great fields of controversy, distinguishable and yet related. The first was his exposure of the injustice and inhumanity of existing industrial arrangements. The second was his exposure of the sophistry, the shallowness and the illogic of the Political Economy, which, professing to expound the operations of existing industry, really operated as a defence and an approval.

For undertaking the twofold task Ruskin had these special qualifications. He was a skilled specialist in the finest kinds of work, or production, on the one hand, and of enjoyment or consumption on the other. Nor was his experience confined to what are commonly called "the fine arts." It comprised also the practical work of architecture, metal work, pottery, jewellery, drawing and other skilled handicrafts, to say nothing of gardening and other branches of rural work. Nor was it only work in its finer qualities that he understood. He had made a close study of the animal, vegetable and mineral forms that furnish the raw material of the industries. He knew the history of the industrial arts from their rise to their recent height or degradation. Another advantage he possessed was his subtle mastery of words. For, as Ruskin showed, no study has suffered more from the power of loose language to mislead thought than Political Economy: nowhere have the "idols of the market-place" so darkened counsel. It was no literary discussions that led Ruskin to insist so frequently upon close scrutiny of terms like "value," "profit," "capital," "consumption," the intellectual misguides of so much economic theory. Everywhere the loose materialism of commerce has obscured the human significance of industrial terminology as of industrial processes themselves.

It is important to understand how it came about that Ruskin set himself with such passionate zeal to his great task

of "humanizing" political economy. His early excursions into the history of the fine arts had filled him with an intense conviction of the organic relation between sound conditions of work and noble character. That what a man does determines what he is, was branded on his mind as the first principle of art and morals. When he turned from the lessons of history to the condition of England as he learned to know it from personal experience and the fierce revelations of his master, Carlyle, a deep depression, almost despair, fell upon him. How was it possible that a people delivered over for the most part to dull, heavy, narrow, mechanical toil, get joy, health and beauty into their life and character? Base production means base consumption: the degradation of work involves the degradation of life. Such was the working life he saw around him. Nor was it redeemed by the idle luxurious life of the favoured few. This was his first approach to the task of social-economic criticism. Base toil and ignoble luxury were related vices. And their common cause? It was this deepening scrutiny into causes that brought Ruskin to the discovery and the passionate denunciation of the injustice and inhumanity of our industrial system and of the science that upheld it. He began to give serious attention to Political Economy in 1855, and two years later he delivered at Manchester the lectures afterwards incorporated in *A Joy for Ever*, his first exposure of the essential vices of competitive commercialism in its bearing on the production and distribution of art-products. His swift-working mind had penetrated into the heart of the matter by the autumn of 1859, when he wrote the lectures that formed the substance of the strange articles which Thackeray reluctantly consented to publish in *Cornhill*, and which became the core of the famous book, *Unto this Last*. The reading public has rightly chosen this from among his long list of writings as the most convincing appeal. For it carried the full tide of Ruskin's passion. But what, it may be said, has such passion to do with Political Economy, except to obscure thought? It is violent, sen-

sational, disorderly, everything that "science" ought not to be. Yes, it is all this. But it does not obscure; it stirs, crowns, stimulates thought. It belongs to the literature of power. It contains penetrating analysis, bold challenges, scathing detection of loose thinking as well as of hard feeling. It has put revolutionary thought into the minds of many of the best men and women of three generations. *Unto this Last* contains the gems of all the criticism and construction of his subsequent writings. The *Crown of Wild Olive*, with its special theme, *What is Work?* and its exposure of the fallacy of profit as the motive of industry, the more elaborate account of human wealth in *Munera Pulveris*, the most formal of his economic works, *Time and Tide*, with its practical application of the true principles to the needs of actual life, these are an unfolding of the simple principles of justice and humanity set out in *Unto this Last*.

In estimating Ruskin's services towards economic and social reform, it is first necessary to get rid of the notion that his treatment is "sentimental" in the sense of unscientific or critical. No such thing. His onslaught upon the mercantile economy of the time is a genuinely scientific criticism. He indicts that economy for its assumption that the money-making activities and motives can be separated from the others which go to make up human nature and life, and can be erected into a separate science and art. In a word, he condemns as fallacious the erection of an "economic man," actuated by purely selfish gain-seeking and work-sharing motives, the results of whose actions have to be squared with known facts by allowances for "friction" and "exceptions." Even the purely marketable wares, with which this economy concerns itself, really involve the play of other human forces which cannot reasonably be excluded, and which co-operate organically to modify, or even to reverse, the operation of the narrower economic motives. When Ruskin insisted that experience showed that the best work could not be got out of a domestic servant by treating his labour as a merely marketable commodity, and ignoring his

"soul" or personality, he was proving a scientific as well as a humanitarian objection against the current economics.

Though Ruskin himself did not stress the language of physiology or psychology, he did clearly insist upon the "organic" connection between one power and faculty, and another between the processes of production and consumption, alike in an individual and in a human society. It is this firm and consistent grasp in the organic concept that is the key to all his economic doctrine. It underlies in the first place his challenge to the standard of "Value" in the current political economy, and to the meaning attributed to "wealth." His announcement of vitality as the criterion of all values is no rhetoric, but the declaration of a truth which ever since has been sapping the old industrial order and its intellectual defences. The gist of the modern movement for social reform is contained in the strictly scientific formula, "There is no wealth but life." But the very breadth of this formula is responsible for a certain sense of failure which comes upon readers of Ruskin who seek an exposition of this doctrine which shall be definite and comprehensive. The fact is, I think, that Ruskin from time to time changed his focus. Sometimes he confined his analytic and constructive treatment to that sphere of human activity and conduct which ordinary political economists would account "economic," viz. the production, distribution and enjoyment of those goods and services which are the means of a livelihood, resolving these goods and services into vital costs and abilities. At other times he shifted the focus, so as to break down all barriers between economic and non-economic processes and products, claiming for his political economy the entire ordering of human life. Nor was that all. Adopting, as he did, the standard of life, or vital satisfaction, as the basic principle of the reformed economy, he insisted on interpreting vital satisfaction, not in terms of what men do desire and value in actual life, but of what they *ought* to desire and value. So he came to insist that the true value of anything was not the

satisfaction it afforded either to its producer or its consumer, but the intrinsic human service it was capable of rendering, if put to its best use. This doctrine of the intrinsic value of things, though sound for social ethics, is baffling when suddenly injected into an analysis of current industry and its products.

When Ruskin says of Political Economy, that it "consists simply in the production, preservation and distribution at fittest time and place, of useful and pleasurable things," he is really ousting social science and putting in its place social cant. For, though it may be contended that ideals and the "oughts" which they contain are themselves facts and forces which admit of scientific study, it can hardly be held that such final interpretations of human ends are of a sufficiently general acceptance to respond to precise scientific treatment. Social reform in its higher reaches must remain an art and cannot be regarded as a science.

Hence the doctrine of intrinsic value attaching to goods, irrespective of what persons think or feel about them, must lead farther and farther away from any close critique of actual industry, and merge in the general art of human society as engaged in the attainment of ideal ends. The constant passing to and fro between the narrower purpose of criticizing and improving actual known conditions of the working life and business world, and this wider scheme of things, to which not only industry but education and the whole art of government are contributory, accounts for much of the discursiveness of Ruskin's essays.

In no one work has he attempted to carry out in its completeness his great task of translating what is called "wealth" into its vital value of human costs and human abilities. More than once he lays out and propounds this intention. At the opening of *Munera Pulveris* we find a clear definition of the task. "The essential work of the political economist is to determine what are in reality useful or life-giving things, and by what degrees and kinds of labour they are attainable and distributable.[1]

[1] *Mun. Pulv.* § xi.

Unfortunately his insistence upon the intrinsic character of "value" makes him stress one of these two aspects of wealth to the neglect of the other. "Value is the life-giving power of anything: cost the quantity of labour required to produce it."[1] Now here "value" comes to be identified with vital ability, and vital cost becomes a separate problem. It is a great pity that Ruskin allowed himself here to go astray from the broader paths which already he had opened up. For, granting the veracity of this definition of value as "life-giving power," that is no right ground for divorcing vital costs from vital abilities. His consistent course would have been in computing the value represented in any stock of "wealth," to treat the vital ability which it contained as a "plus" and the vital cost or disability imposed by its production as a "minus," the final value being represented by the surplus of the former over the latter. Had he followed out on the "cost" side the same analysis which he applied in *Munera Pulveris* to the "ability" side, he would have set the subject of Political Economy upon sure foundations. For his analysis of economic ability is just and penetrating. No sane art of society can disregard the element which he terms intrinsic value, or accept as valid the purely mercantile conception, according to which a whisky distillery may be more valuable than a flour mill, and £100 worth of bad books are equal to £100 worth of good books.

But Ruskin recognizes that good books can have no value in themselves, although their goodness is "intrinsic." There must be "acceptant capacity," i.e. consumers who are able to get their goodness out of goods. "A horse is no wealth to us if we cannot ride, nor a picture if we cannot see, *nor any noble thing be wealth except to a noble person.*"[2]

This proviso is of the deepest significance in linking up Ruskin's art of education to the main body of his political economy. For education is to be directed primarily and consciously to making people capable of enjoyment that is

[1] *Mun. Pulv.* § xii. [2] *Ibid.* § xiv.

noble. This alone makes them capable of wealth. Base persons or a debased community are "inherently and eternally incapable of wealth."

A third test of the "value" attaching to any stock of wealth follows from the second. The amount of vital use got out of any wealth will depend, not only upon the capacity of enjoyment in those who get it, but also upon the quantity which each gets. We must look, therefore, not only to the nature of the wealth and to the value or acquired capacity of the consumer, but also to the "distribution" of the wealth, in order to know how much real human service or ability it contains.

When, therefore, a commercial economist shows us goods "valued," by his valuation, at £1,000, we can only ascertain the human value they contain by asking and getting an answer to three questions :—

(1) What wholesome human service are they capable of rendering ?
(2) What kinds of persons will get them ?
(3) How much will each person get ?

Now, if an analysis identical with this had been applied to the "cost" side of value and wealth, so as to tell us, regarding any stock of wealth, we should have answers to the following questions :—

(1) How much human life was spent—how much painful or injurious toil incurred—in producing it ?
(2) What sort of workers, strong or weak, old or young, etc., had to do the work ?
(3) How was the work distributed among the workers in respect of hours of labour ?

The resolution of commercial into human values would then, in form at any rate, be complete. We should then know the value or human importance attaching to anything that claimed to be wealth, because it possessed a selling value.

Now, if we take the whole body of Ruskin's social-economic criticism, we can piece together out of it this complete analysis. But, for the "cost" side, we have to have recourse to many different books. Though, as I have said, it was the recognition of the degradation of labour and the worker by subjection to a mechanical despotism that first drew Ruskin out of the narrower path of art criticism, he nowhere set out his final judgments upon modern industry with the same compactness which in *Munera Pulveris* he brought to bear upon the theme of vital ability. Though he was keenly and bitterly sensitive to the two enormities of the industrial system, the degradation of machine work and the excessive burden of daily toil, the passion of indignation which these evils aroused in him somewhat disturbed his analytic genius. While, therefore, we find in *A Joy for Ever* the beginnings of a complete vital analysis of human acts in the realm of art-production, we must roam through the whole body of his later writings, from *Time and Tide* to *Fors* and *Præterita*, for his account of the vital virtues and defects of the productive processes.

Ruskin's assault upon the domain of the machine has probably done more than anything else to cause his political economy to be discounted as sentimental and unpractical. And yet it was an accurate instinct which led him to recognize that "It is not labour that is divided but the men—divided into mere segments of men, broken into small fragments and crumbs of life. It is a sad account of a man to give of himself that he has spent his life in opening a valve, and never made anything but the eighteenth part of a pin."

Social reformers were, he rightly reckoned, certain to concern themselves too exclusively with the task of trying to improve the conditions of pay, the distribution of wealth, to the comparative neglect of the conditions of work. Capitalism would be able to maintain its worst tyranny, that of sub-divided and de-humanizing toil, by concessions as liberal as they had to be, upon the wages question. This, Ruskin clearly saw, would in itself be no solution of the social problem. It

would leave degraded human beings with more money to apply to the satisfaction of degraded tastes. The whole problem of luxury or bad wealth, "illth," would remain unsolved.

If, therefore, we deem some of Ruskin's indictments of machinery excessively sentimental, we should recognize that this excess has been fruitful in correcting the narrow conception of the Labour movement which prevailed in Mid-Victorian times. If to-day Labour leaders and social reformers in general are quite as keenly set upon reducing the hours of labour and otherwise diminishing the pressure of the machine upon the man who tends it, we have to thank men like Ruskin and Morris for much of this revolt. Not even yet have psychologists succeeded in making us recognize the amount of vital damage done by setting men and women to spend most of their time and energy in some single narrow routine—not merely the painful fatigue and conscious or unconscious atrophy of other productive capacities, but the narrowing of the capacity for enjoyment which comes from this over-specialization. Not more productivity, but more liberty from industry, should be the chief demand of humanist reformers to-day, and they should boldly announce the gospel of Ruskin as theirs. The control man to-day possesses over nature is sufficiently great to enable every civilized nation to secure for all its population an adequate livelihood by organized co-operative activity, without exhausting the powers of any class, or leaving it with sufficient leisure and interest to devote to non-industrial pursuits which may be more truly productive of wealth than those which form their direct contribution to "social service."

Ruskin was not only a humanist in the realm of industry; he was a Socialist. By this I mean that he believed that industry should be directed by the motive of social good, not of individual gain. This notion that if each man strove to get the most for himself he would somehow be impelled to pursue a line of conduct advantageous to his fellow-men, was rejected by him as false to the facts of life. This doctrine

of "an invisible hand" which reconciled individual greed with social benefit, belonged to the pious mysticism of the business man's philosophy. Ruskin roundly denounced its falsity. He recognized that, if this or any other department of human conduct were to work in a satisfactory way, individuals must know what they were doing, and work to do it. To tell them that they were at liberty to be as selfish, as covetous and as over-reaching as they liked, but that everything would come out right in the end, was to him an immoral piece of sophistry. He wanted to have a Society in which social motives consciously prevailed, and where social order ruled life and conduct. "Government and Co-operation are in all things the Laws of Life; Anarchy and Competition the Laws of Death." But, though a Socialist, he was not a democrat, but quite other. Indeed, he has often been described, and described himself as an aristocrat. Not merely did he repudiate with violence two out of the three terms of the revolutionary trinity, viz. liberty and equality, insisting that men were not equal and not intended to be free, but, following his master, Carlyle, he stretched to an extreme the rights of masterhood and authority. Power, wisdom and goodness could not emanate from the people for purposes of self-government; they must be exercised from above. By whom? By idle parasitic landlords, reaping where they have not sown? By greedy mill-owners, cheating merchants, tyrannical profiteers? This following of Carlyle into a rejection of democracy brought Ruskin into difficulties when he sought to turn from criticism to constructive policy. For while Carlyle could pick and choose his "heroes," and deck them out with plausibility of rhetoric, Ruskin had to convert idlers and gamesters or philistine Gradgrinds into captains of industry. Somehow or other, landowners and capitalists were to regard their land and capital and the power it gave them over the lives of the workers as a public trust, and they were to throw themselves with holy zeal into the rôle of voluntary trustees for the community, only taking out of the concern what was

necessary to support them in reasonable comfort and dignity. How this total change of character and outlook was to come about Ruskin never explained. It belonged to an element of pure romance which clung to him through life. Nothing short of a wholesale miraculous conversion was required to give plausibility to such a scheme.

But, though this assumption of a natural and self-appointed aristocracy, formed out of the very upper classes whose vicious tyranny his economic analysis had exposed, remains quite unconvincing, there is much in the structure of his reformed society that is wise and sound. *Time and Tide* and *Fors* are full of suggestions keenly prophetic of the new social-economic order which is even now pressing through the broken shell of the nineteenth-century individualism. Skilled manual labour, with the apparent exception of agriculture, he relegates to a guild system not very different from the Guild Socialism which to-day appears in many quarters to be displacing both the traditional Trade Unionism and the State Socialism of last century. These self-governing guilds must be considered in some measure as a substitute for the earlier captains of industry idea, and a concession to democratic sentiment. Indeed, it may be held that Ruskin's objection, like that of most syndicalists of to-day, was not to democracy *per se*, but rather to political democracy, i.e. the control of a productive society by consumer-citizens bound together by the casual tie of locality, and not by any serviceable bond of co-operative life.

But, while Ruskin in his later thinking usually conceives of manufactures and commerce controlled by voluntary guilds—a State within the political State—Agriculture is laid out under the State as a revised feudal system. "The right action of a State respecting its land is, indeed, to secure it in various portions to those of its citizens who deserve to be entrusted with it, according to their respective desires and proved capacities; and after having so secured it to each, to exercise such vigilance over his treatment of it as the State must give

also to his treatment of his wife and servants; for the most part leaving him free, but interfering in cases of gross mismanagement or abuse of power. And, in the case of great old families—which always ought to be, and in some measure, however decadent, still truly are, the noblest monumental architecture of the kingdom, living temples of sacred tradition and heroes' religion—so much land ought to be granted to them in perpetuity as may enable them to live thereon with all circumstance of state and outward nobleness; *but their incomes must in nowise be derived from the rents of it*, nor must they be occupied (even in the most distant and subordinately administered methods) in the exaction of rents. That is not nobleman's work. Their income must be fixed and paid by the State, as the King's is." [1]

Here nationalization of the land appears to be accompanied by the retention of local landlords as public stewards. The work of local government in the ordinary sense of that term would remain with this landed aristocracy. Ruskin retained through life a singular tenderness of feeling for the local gentry whose stately homes he was wont to visit as a child with his father, driving about in a gig to take orders for "sherry." His imagination wove a romantic history around their origin, which later on he sought to extend to the rest of the "upper classes." "The upper classes, broadly speaking, are originally composed of the best bred (in the merely animal sense of the term), the most energetic and most thoughtful of the population, who, either by strength of arm seize the land from the rest and make slaves of them, or bring desert land into cultivation, over which they have, therefore, within certain limits, true personal rights; or, by industry, accumulate other property, or by choice devote themselves to intellectual pursuits, and, though poor, obtain an acknowledged superiority of position, shown by benefits conferred in industry, or in teaching, or in gifts of art." This quite fictitious historical basis serves to support the status of his aristocracy. Though the present

[1] *Time and Tide*, § 151.

representatives may be degraded from this generally noble stock, they will, he confidingly supposes, be capable of recovery, and so he feels entitled to entrust them with great powers of government. This aristocracy is divisible into three great classes. First come the landed proprietors and soldiers, essentially one political body (for the possession of land can only be maintained by military power); secondly, the moneyed men and leaders of commerce; thirdly, the professional men and members in science, art and literature.[1]

These classes are to be maintained by the State, not by casual fees; they are to be specially educated in State schools, and are in every way to be regarded as public officers. It is, however, difficult to draw out the finer forms in Ruskin's great social tapestry. For he is always modifying the design and weaving in new patterns. Nor is it fair to press him unduly on the score of consistency. He should rather be treated on the constructive side as an experimental artist, trying now this, now the other idea, by tricking it out with copious realism of detail, often picking it to pieces and beginning a new plan. The same is true of the various practical schemes of reformed industry into which he threw his energy and money so liberally: the revival of the spinning industry in Westmorland and in the Isle of Man, the road-making at Oxford, the printing at Orpington, and the various ambitious projects for a new education and a new industrial society dedicated to St. George. In all these projects, mingled with a good deal of fantastical and wayward idiosyncrasy, was the instinct of a true pioneer not too remote from the spirit of his age. In economic, as in educational reform, he was no barren prophet of denunciation, but a true leader towards a land of promise. Long before scientific pedagogy had worked out the psychology of the relations between brain and hand work, Ruskin had recognized their fundamental importance and had demanded the union of the workshop and the schoolroom. When nature and art, in any real sense, were taboo in our schools,

[1] *Time and Tide*, § 138, 139.

he exposed their vital value, not merely or mainly as subjects in a curriculum, but as pervasive and suggestive influences in the atmosphere of education. A minimum wage based upon the wholesome maintenance of the worker and his family, a shorter working day, the housing problem, the revival of rural life, and such specific reforms as smoke abatement and the prevention of river pollution, owe an immense and often unrecognized debt to Ruskin's early advocacy. He was an assiduous sower of many seeds which, lying in the ground for a long generation, are now beginning to bear a vigorous crop.

His great work as political economist was to turn the thoughts of his countrymen from a quantitative to a qualitative economy, or in other words to substitute the vital for the pecuniary standard of value. In the performance of this task he exposed much that was fallacious and impertinent in the assumptions and the reasoning of the current political economy. While some of his own theorising, particularly upon such questions as the validity of interest and the unprofitable value of exchange, is itself open to serious objection, not a little of his exploration into the technique of commerce is exceedingly profitable. His insistence, for example, upon consumption, not production, as the final goal of economic activity, and his revelation of the crop of follies which grew from the acceptance of Mills' pronouncement that "A demand for commodities is not a demand for labour," were an important contribution towards the reform of the mercantile economy itself. Currency reformers, who will need all their wits for the coming monetary crisis, would not do ill if they turned to the keen discussion upon money in *Time and Tide*. For though it is true that Ruskin was sometimes too impatient a controversialist to understand his adversary's case, he had a very accurate instinct for getting at the heart of the matter. Approaching social and economic structure rather as an artist than as a scientist, he felt his way down to the roots of many a problem, and then turned on it the illuminating lantern of his analytic genius. His teaching was genuinely revolutionary.

For he saw that the social economic system was rotten to its roots with the moral cancer of a wrong motive, and that no concessions, modifications or alleviations would restore health. Nothing short of a complete transformation of its structure and a new spirit would suffice. The wrappings of literary genius, the emotional coruscations in which this revolutionary doctrine was conveyed, served during Ruskin's lifetime to render it innocuous. The profiteers and their academic mercenaries were easily able to laugh out of consideration the whims and fads of this literary word painter, this extravagant art critic, who had strayed into their preserves. This successful disparagement and contempt for the things he prized most dearly depressed and embittered Ruskin's later life. But I am disposed to think that this literary cover for his ideas was itself a sound operation of the self-protective instinct of a mind which in its depths was conscious of harbouring thought for which the times were not yet ripe. The heavy price he paid in contemporary neglect will, I think, be refunded to his memory in years to come in an England enriched by the fruits of many of those thoughts rejected by the blindness of his generation.

RUSKIN AND SHAKESPEARE

BY
PROFESSOR J. A. DALE

RUSKIN AND SHAKESPEARE

RUSKIN and Shakespeare! These names conjure up the whole world of thought suggested by the opposition of artist and moralist, though the moralist was an artist and the artist as stern as fate. Ruskin knew his Shakespeare well. He wrote no treatise on him, but his frequent references[1] made a deeply suggestive appreciation, valuable as a study of Shakespeare, of criticism, of Ruskin himself, and of human nature. Ruskin always wrote under the stress of emotions; they burn or tremble through all his judgments. I doubt if any writer has ever revealed himself with such complete sincerity and power over so wide a range. The long pageant of his moods he set forth in language of matchless adaptability, for all the world to see. This description is truest of *Fors Clavigera*, and in greater or less degree of all the works written after *Unto this Last*; but it is true of whatever he wrote, from the first passionate defence of Turner (which grew into *Modern Painters*) to the last retrospect in *Præterita*. The dominant note is profoundly pathetic—the intense love of the loveliness in which the artist mind longs to dwell, the intolerable pressure of the human problems that invade every vision and turns its very beauty into torment.

"I cannot paint nor read, nor look at minerals, nor do anything else that I like, and the very light of the morning sun[2] has become hateful to me, because of the misery that

[1] I omit from consideration here the study of Shakespeare's heroines in *Sesame and Lilies*.

[2] Of all Ruskin's delights in nature, that of sunrise (which he seldom missed) was perhaps the most constant.

I know, and see signs of where I know it not, which no imagination can interpret too bitterly."

Then the yearning for an honourable peace reinforces the love of man and love of justice in the resolve :—

"Therefore I will endure it no longer quietly ; but henceforward with any few or many who will help, do my poor best to abate this misery" (*Fors*, 1).

In him artist and moralist fought distressing war, allowing him fitful sight of marvellous beauty, and painful grasp of great truths. It distracted and exhausted him, leaving him with the hope of King Arthur, who all his life had followed the gleam and listened to the stars—yet when he passed "all his mind was clouded with a doubt." To read his books in order is to watch a heart that, deeply loving and "strongly loathing, gently broke."

Nearly all subjects appealed to Ruskin, and all he touched unlocked his heart. It will be remembered that Wordsworth used this phrase of the sonnets of Shakespeare : "With this key Shakespeare unlocked his heart"—and so aroused the good-humoured scorn of Browning—"did Shakespeare? then the less Shakespeare he!" These judgments are significant. Wordsworth chose "the mind of man" for the "main haunt and region of (his) song" ; but it proved in practice to be the mind of the one man to whom he gave such devoted study himself. This was the mind in whose revelation he spent the long after-glow of his poetic youth ; the mind to which was dedicated the never-finished "cathedral of (his) song." Browning proclaimed the right of the artist to a privacy among his own creations—with a confidence born of the doubtful justice of the claim in his own case. Shakespeare had no need. "Scattering largess like the sun," his spirit burned upon its central hearth unseen.

Like the sun ! Ruskin realized the meaning of that simile and expressed it with great beauty and pathos.

" He seems to have been sent essentially to take universal and equal grasp of the human nature. . . . It was necessary he should lean no way . . . be able to sympathize so completely with all creatures as to deprive himself, together with his personal identity, *even of his conscience* . . . otherwise his conscience and indignation would make him unjust to them. . . . He must be utterly without anger, utterly without purpose ; for if a man has any serious purpose in life, that which runs counter to it or is foreign to it will be looked at frowningly or carelessly. Shakespeare was forbidden of Heaven to have any plans. To *do* any good or get any good in the common sense of good, was not to be within his permitted range of work. Not for him the founding of institutions, the preaching of doctrines, or the repression of abuses. Neither he nor the sun did on any morning that they rose together receive charge from their Maker concerning such things. They were both of them to shine on the evil and good, both to behold unoffendedly all that was upon earth, to burn unappalled upon the spears of kings, and undisdaining upon the reeds of the rivers" (*Modern Painters*, IV. v. 20).

Here Ruskin shows remarkable appreciation of a type very opposed to his own, with a touch of bitterness due to his consciousness of the difference (see *Frondes Agrestes*, § 5). But it shows a conception of the artist's function narrowed by the anxiety to get a particular kind of good out of it. This anxiety becomes very explicit and meets its foredoomed disappointment in what is, perhaps, the most beautiful of all his writings, *The Mystery of Life and its Arts*, which he wrote when " startled by the fading of the sunshine from the cloud of his life." The mystery of life is our ignorance of it—the source of unreasoning hope, unreasoning despair, folly, apathy, madness : the hourly victory of the grave, the sting of death (W. Watson : *The Great Misgiving*).

"This human life shares in the nature of it, not only the evanescence, but the mystery of the cloud; its avenues are wreathed in darkness, and its forms and courses not less fantastic than spectral and obscure; so that not only in the variety which we cannot grasp, but in the shadow which we cannot pierce, it is true of this cloudy life of ours, that 'man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain'" (*Sesame and Lilies*, § 98).

This melancholy conviction, held as long as human eyes have watched the clouds, will be remembered in Shakespeare's words rather than in Ruskin's :—

> the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on.

When Ruskin wrote *The Mystery of Life*, he was with Prospero. Vexed for a moment by unpleasant evidence of the transiency of the visions he had called up, Prospero gives this unforgettable voice to his deep underlying irony. Ruskin's words were struck out of his melancholy by "the sudden agony of the knowledge that the fabric of life was as fragile as a dream." But Prospero could at least embody his own dreams; his spells had never cracked. Of Ruskin's dreams, every one had failed him; the magic of his words seemed potent only to mislead (*Sesame and Lilies*, § 97).

In this mood when all things appealed to him with absolute sternness, with that sharpened analysis which is the sad recompense of sorrow and pessimism, he turned to the arts for comfort. In them, as in nature, he had always seen the revelation of divine purpose; we recall how in passages of *Modern Painters* he was later to scorn, he talks of divine "ordinance," as though in the divine secrets (*Frondes Agrestes*, § 4, 72 and 73). But now his mood is of dearly

bought and bitter humility. He turns first to those artists whose great concern was the truth about the "four last things"—Dante and Milton. "There are none who for earnestness of thought and mastery of word can be classed with these." This first class of seer give their explanation of life in a form both imaginative and reasoning—so that we may expect a direct account of our problems; surely they will "justify the ways of God to man." But no. It is just in their attempts to explain, that we most surely meet their limitations—of sect and age and character. And these limitations finally destroy authority—if that is the kind of authority we look for—"they were warped in their temper and thwarted in their search for truth."

"But greater men than these have been—innocent-hearted—too great for contest. Men like Homer and Shakespeare, of so unrecognized personality, that it disappears in future ages and becomes ghostly like the tradition of a lost heathen god. Men, therefore, to whose unoffended, uncondemning sight the whole of human nature reveals itself in a pathetic weakness with which they will not strive, or in mournful and transitory strength which they dare not praise."

These men, "the intellectual measure of cultured men," "centres of mortal intelligence," what do they "deliver to us of conviction respecting what it most behoves that intelligence to grasp? . . . Have they any peace to promise to our unrest—any redemption to our misery?"

The questioner listens at his oracles to catch the reply his heart longs for. When they seem to say "all we know of answer is to be learnt in faithful living," the undesired words come like a rebuff, none the less final and bitter for being lovely in form.

In the famous "pathetic fallacy" chapter (*Modern Painters*, III) he ranks Shakespeare (with Homer again, and this time with Dante) as the *first* rank, and mentions Wordsworth, Keats and Tennyson as of the *second*. The

first are *creative*; the source of their power is (in the elaborate tabulation of *Modern Painters*, II) the imagination penetrative, which is the insight into process.

"Every character that is so much as touched by men like Aeschylus, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, is by them held by the heart; and every circumstance or sentence of their being, speaking or seeming, is seized by process from within, and is referred to that inner secret spring of which the hold is never lost for an instant."

Here the truth (expressed in *Modern Painters* manner) is that the artistic genius, in its work of character-making, grasps at once the right principles of creation—makes characters fictitious indeed, but in a very true sense real specimens of our race. This is essential truth about Shakespeare at his best.

In this conception Ruskin had much which might have helped him out of his dilemma; and in most of his appreciation of Shakespeare he held fast to it.

"The corruption of the schools of high art . . . consists in the sacrifice of truth to beauty. Great art dwells on all that is beautiful; but false art omits or changes all that is ugly, i.e. 'whatever it thinks objectionable'" (*Modern Painters*, III. iv. 13–15).

This false art is of the *vulgar idealist*—a notable phrase. The low ideal is easily won which follows a "vulgar pursuit of physical beauty," or (let it not be forgotten) a pale phantom of perfect character.

"The greater the master of the ideal, the more perfectly true in portraiture will his individual figures be always found, the more subtle and bold his arts of harmony and contrast. This is a universal principle, common to all great art. . . . The fact is that a man who can see truth in all, sees it wholly,

and neither desires nor cares to mutilate it" (*Modern Painters*, III. iv. 7, 3).

The true relation between the general and the particular in art could hardly be better expressed than in his "constant law that the greatest men . . . live entirely in their own age, and that the greatest fruits of their work are gathered out of their own age . . . they are perfect plays just because there is no care about centuries in them, but a life which all men recognize for the human life of all time; and this it is not because Shakespeare sought to give universal truth, but because painting honestly and completely from the men about him, he painted that human nature which is indeed constant enough; a rogue in the fifteenth century being at heart what a rogue is in the nineteenth and was in the twelfth. . . . And the work of these great idealists is always universal; not because it is *not portraiture*, but because it is *complete* portrait down to the heart which is the same in all ages. But the work of the mean idealists is *not universal*, not because it is portrait, but because it is *half portrait*.

There cannot be many more vital pieces of art criticism than this.

There is one element of "complete" human portraiture which causes grave difficulty to the moralist—the constant outcrop of animal coarseness; "one strange, but quite essential, character in us." Ruskin has left very interesting studies of the problem in the first *Lecture on Art* and in *Fors*, 34. He notices in Shakespeare and in his kinsman Chaucer, the delight in stooping to play with evil and enjoy the jesting of "entirely gross persons" (*Lectures on Art*, § 14). The solemn truthfulness of this phrase instantly calls to my mind the scene between old Jack Falstaff and the Chief Justice—with Ruskin in the latter rôle. Falstaff, too, has his version of the matter.

"There is a thing, Harry, which thou hast often heard of,

and it is known to many in our land by the name of pitch ; this pitch, as ancient writers do report, doth defile."

Poor old Jack ! he throve on pitch, till the surfeit of it killed him. And this is one of Shakespeare's greatest creations—his masterpiece of comedy ! "You will find," says Ruskin, "that whenever Englishmen are wholly without this instinct, their genius is comparatively weak and restricted." He even tells us (*Fors*, 34) that it is the safeguard of the genius of universal sympathy, "against weak enthusiasms and ideals." But "the imaginative power always purifies. Shakespeare and Chaucer threw off, at noble work, the lower part of their natures as they would a rough dress." This is part of their very reality, their human truth. He notes, too (*Modern Painters*, III. iv. 16, 9), that we have "lost since Shakespeare's day the power of laughing at bad jests." We may agree or not—for each age has its own cherished type of bad jest—the important point is that Ruskin regarded it as real loss of power. The English genius excels (he tells us in the *Lectures on Art*) in the portraiture of living people ; it has intense power of expression and invention in domestic drama. This genius he finds in Shakespeare ; who does reproduce life at the fullest possible, evil as well as good, with tolerance and rightness, "complete . . . down to the heart which is the same in all ages."

In these passages Ruskin sees clearly that his greatest class (except Dante, who appears in both classes for different reasons and must here be left out of account) of poets are not engaged in search for truth, as truth and as search. When Keats said "Truth is Beauty and Beauty Truth," he was in Ruskin's first class (as Ruskin seems at times inclined to admit him). Nor does it follow even that the poet is one of the wisest and best in the ordinary meaning. "Art is a whimsical goddess, and a capricious ; her strong sense of joy tolerates no dulness ; and live we never so spotlessly, still may she turn her back upon us" (Whistler). In any case

it is not *as* seekers for truth, nor *as* wisest and best, that poets write—above all that Shakespeare wrote : they leave that to philosophers and moralists.

So Shakespeare and Homer also have no answer to the questions put in *The Mystery of Life.* These greatest work to reproduce what they see—life at its fullest ; with a forgery divine. The world they see is the same as ours, its problems are the same, and not appreciably nearer solution. This very fact gives them their power over us ; the world they illumine is our world. They too are men like ourselves ; their triumph is not only miraculous but dear to us, because it is the strength of our familiar weakness. They are not our oracles, but brother-men to be grasped by the hand and heart. If we join ourselves to the company of the artists, we must above all things not fail to catch something of their joy (to miss that, said R. L. S., is to miss all). In science and theology we may have them at a disadvantage. We may add their experience to ours, not forgetting that we have knowledge to add to theirs ; if we are worthy we shall attain a finer insight, deeper love, pity, hope, sorrow, admiration, forgiveness, for our race,—but of its whence and whither and why, learn truly nothing.

Yet what a company it is that awaits us, and what discourse is theirs ! Speech is far richer in meaning, far more intensely symbolic, than the medium of any other of the arts. Through it vibrates note after note from humanity's heartstrings, the harmony swelling with the writer's passion and the reader's sympathy, deep calling unto deep.

So far, then, as the artists of speech reproduce life, they reproduce also its problems, and that most real of all the qualities of these problems, their insolubleness. The greater the reproductive art, the more infallibly must it reproduce human fallibility. If they have any answer to ultimate questions, it is that also of life ; that love and pleasure and discipline and truth are its rewards, whatever its destination. Tragedy in art, as in life, will teach us the lesson of science

and religion; that the wages of sin is death; and that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. It will show us "under Death's spread hand," the hope that shines in human courage, undaunted before pain and ignorance and sin.

These are the lines upon which we may look for the "teaching" of drama. Dramatic poetry has for its special subject the development of character, of soul. The presentation of this is the final matter of technique, profoundly influenced by stage conditions. The action must be designed, plotted out, composed like a picture (for it is to appeal primarily to the eye). But the play is more than a pageant, as the picture is more than a design. For the deeds and words must be the natural efflorescence of character—that is the final dramatic test. The dramatist's business, then, is to reproduce, to recreate, life. By the artistic arrangement of plot, character, scene and speech, the dramatist arrests attention; he eliminates things that distract from the central issues. By the visible clash of action he gives fresh and memorable force to the lessons of life.

Drama's dependence on life Ruskin finds best expressed by "a faultless and complete epitome of mimetic art," which Shakespeare has put into the mouth of Theseus :—

"The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them."

But shadows!

All these dreams of Shakespeare, as those of true and strong men must be, are phantoms divine and shadows of reality (*Munera Pulveris*, 133).

Not like the dream of Imogen :—

> 'Twas but a bolt of nothing, shot at nothing,
> Which the brain makes of fumes.

It is the foundation of all his teaching—the clue to his approach from art to social reform :—

"*But Shadows!* Make them as beautiful as you can; use them only to enable you to remember and love what they are cast by. If ever you prefer the skill of them to the simplicity of the truth, or the pleasure of them to the power of the truth, you have fallen into that vice of folly given by Prodicus, to take the shadow for the substance. . . . There is nothing that I tell you with more eager desire that you should believe—nothing with wider grant in my experience for requiring you to believe, than this, that you never will love art well till you love what she mirrors better" (*Eagle's Nest*, § 39).

In *The Mystery of Life*, Ruskin emphasized with sad clearness the helplessness, in face of the last things, which the artist shares with his fellow mortals. Mortality is indeed a dimension in which we must ultimately conceive all things. We have made gods in our own image, and heavens in the likeness of earth. Art, while blossoming immediately from the joy or pain of a moment, born in mortal moods and senses, yet approaches immortality just because its source is the joy and pain that makes the whole race kin. Art is long; coeval with the emotions, whose transiency is everlasting. They break ever fresh from the same well-spring; the same eyes shine, the same hearts beat, beneath all the harlequinade of time and place. But knowledge and explanation—science, morals, theology—being a ceaseless evolution, are the really transitory things. They rise in tortuous spiral of superstition and dream and hypothesis, and theory contradicting theory; the slow reward of groping hands and painful feet

> Song is not Truth, not Wisdom: but the rose
> Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes.

Art has for its special gift to record this kindling of life, so that its momentary flash may live on in forms

> whose beauty Time shall spare,
> Though a breath made them.

"Though a breath made them!" because, rather, what made them was the breath of life.

That is how art can fulfil what Ruskin says of it "to enable us to be glad, and be glad justly." But, if we ask of it what it cannot give, we shall do as he did in *The Mystery of Life*, get sorrow instead of joy. When he withdrew this lecture from a later edition of *Sesame and Lilies*, one of his chief reasons was :—

"The feeling that I had not enough examined the spirit of faith in God, and hope in futurity, which though unexpressed were meant by the master of tragedy to be felt by the spectator, what they were to himself, the solution and consolation of all the wonderfulness of sorrow (*Fors*, 91).

In other words, he withdrew it because he found the solution of *The Mystery of Life* in the religious belief he had regained. Shakespeare's dramatic world was consistent with this belief, and it was natural Shakespeare should seem to share it. Ruskin thus found his answer not in art but in religion, He turned from the Shakespeare of the stage to the Shakespeare whose heart was never unlocked.

It is outside our scope to examine how to some minds—to Browning for example—art has seemed to give the assurance Ruskin longed for in vain. No poet has followed his art into a more distant future than Tennyson in "Parnassus." The poet is the seeing eye, the burning heart, the singing voice. If he should be immortal, and follow the race in its age-long upward growth till our very world and all its life is forgotten, he will be to his new world what he was to this.

Other songs for other worlds! the fire within him would not falter;
Let the golden Iliad vanish! Homer here is Homer there.

The mystery of life will reveal to the artist its wonder and beauty, its terror and pity. It will find in him the comfort of a voice for its promise and despair. He may or may not be

one of those who care very greatly for the ultimate solution. He may dream that some day religion, and philosophy, and art will be one and the same; and, so united, come within sight of the end. But what we ask of him—as distinct from what we ask of others—is the shifting vision of the manifold appearances, in joy and pain, in comedy and tragedy, in life and death, of that

> Beauty, a living presence of the earth,

who

> Pitches her tent before him as he moves.[1]

[1] Wordsworth, "Recluse."

RUSKIN AND AN EARLY FRIENDSHIP

WITH MANY UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

BY

J. H. WHITEHOUSE

RUSKIN AND AN EARLY FRIENDSHIP

THE following letters were addressed to William Macdonald Macdonald, with whom in his early life Ruskin was on terms of warm friendship. He first met him in 1847 at Leamington, and relates the incident in *Præterita*. Macdonald had recently come into possession under trustees of a large Highland estate, and one of his properties was a shooting lodge at Crossmount between Lochs Rannoch and Tummel. Ruskin visited Macdonald here in September of 1847, and makes a brief reference to the visit in *Præterita*.

Very little has been written or is known of the friendship between the two young men. In the official biography of Ruskin there is only a passing reference to Macdonald, and in the collection of Ruskin's letters published in the Library edition none is given to Macdonald. In *Præterita* Ruskin describes Macdonald as "a thin, dark Highlander, with some expression of gloom upon his features when at rest, but with quite the sweetest smile for his friends that I have ever seen."

The first letter is undated, but was written in September 1847, a few days after Ruskin had left Crossmount. Ruskin was now twenty-eight years old. It is clear from this letter that Macdonald was a strong believer in evangelical theology, and that much discussion on religion had taken place between the two men. Ruskin's broader faith is expressed, though with moderation and gentleness.

Letter 1.

[*September* 1847].

Dear Macdonald,—I am very very grateful to you for caring for me so much and being sorry that I am gone, though

I cannot understand why it should be so, for I have to excuse myself to you for very selfish behaviour all the time, using your house as an inn, doing my own work and seeking my own pleasure, and paying no respect to nor endeavouring to procure the pleasure of any one else. I did not this willingly, but I was forced to do so. I had lost the whole winter and was getting into a morbid, almost rabid, state of feeling at the continued condition of non-advancement. I hope when I—if you will allow me to entertain such an idea—come again, I shall be more capable of joining in other people's pleasures, and of course more happy myself.

I cannot answer nor speak of all the subjects of your letter to-day. I have others which must be answered. I almost wonder you should either have expected, or if expected, feared any remarks of mine respecting what you thought right. Had they been made in a presuming spirit I do not see why you should have cared about or in any way regarded them, but I am too much in a state of doubt and questioning about myself and all things to venture to say one word except in the form of question respecting the various manifestations of a zeal which it is my shame that I cannot share. Yet if you ask me what I think of the tract you sent, or of the plan of sending tracts in general, I must answer that it seems to me to be a matter dependent much on your knowledge of the character of the person to whom they are sent, and I think that very often granting that every letter should be useful, it might yet be more useful in another way. For instance, if you had sent me such a tract eight years ago when I was at college I should certainly have thrown it aside with contumely, and returned you a scoffing letter which might have made you turn away from me as a fool and a reprobate. But if you had sent me a quotation from Locke, or Bacon, or Paley, or Plato, or Hooker, or directly from the Bible, following it up with some slightly touched reflection of your own, I should have attended to it with respect, and you might have led me up, or down, to tracts in time. I think also there is some danger of wasting one's

feelings on false occasions. I feel enough to discourage and to sadden in life without directly anticipating every possible misfortune, and I think it unwise to base one's religious meditations on contingencies to which an insurance office would pay slight regard. We cannot too often think of death, or its momentous probabilities, but I think it irrational to make it a particularly mortiferal subject of reflection that I should drive down the vale of the Tummel eighteen miles, and that you should not propose seeing me at Perth until next week. I will write again D.V. to-morrow. Meantime will you just tell me what you think of what is said about missionaries in *The Times*, September 24, at the close of the review of *Omoo*.

Will you also remember me to Mr. Smith and excuse me to him for not bidding him good-bye—my head was full of all manner of things.

Remember me to my kind friends your sisters, and tell Lendrick I ordered his triumphal car at half-past twelve on Thursday. Kind regards to him.

With best love, ever faithfully yours,

J. Ruskin.

Pitlochrie, *Tuesday*.

The letter apparently caused pain and misunderstanding, and Ruskin writes in the next letter with much feeling to repel the interpretation given to his words. This letter is dated from Bowerswell, Perth. This was the residence of Mr. George Gray, the father of Euphemia Chalmers Gray. Ruskin had known Miss Gray since she was a child. It was for her that he wrote *The King of the Golden River*, and he married her in April 1848, the year after this letter was written. The letter appears to be the only one known in which he expresses his feelings for Miss Gray.

Letter 2.

Bowerswell, Perth, *5th October* [1847].

Dearest Macdonald,—I am indeed grieved to have vexed you so much, both for your sake and mine; but indeed it is

not I who have written, but you who have read carelessly, and without allowing for the difference of temperament between us which makes me appear to you to write coldly and presumptuously: nothing could be further from my purpose, nothing more foreign to my disposition. God knows that while I am eaten up with vanity and selfishness to the very heart's core there is not the lightest or lowest subject on which I could now utter a presumptuous word, so humbled have I lately been, and so violently cast down from all high thoughts; and for carelessness, surely it is no trifling an accusation this, that I could have thoughtlessly answered so kind a letter as yours. I answered it more shortly than I ought, having much at present on my hands and on my heart. I answered it a little hardly and coarsely, because there was much in the feelings of which your letter was the ultimate expression which ran counter to certain malignities and evil thoughts in my own heart, but I did not answer it carelessly. I believe, very firmly, though mind you I state not my firmest belief as of any weight or value, that there is much in your present feelings which is utterly false and morbid, and which in large measure diminishes your usefulness to myself and others. You have been startled by it into misreading my letter in the first instance, and carelessly wounding me in the second. You will not find the least ground in my letter for supposing me to calculate on only prolongation of life. You will find that I calculate on it as far, and no farther in driving to Pitlochrie as in walking to Kinloch Rannoch. You say I write to you "that it is quite unnecessary that we should for one moment think that we may not meet again till we stand together before the Judgement Seat." Re-read my letter, and consider what a direct falsehood you would have uttered concerning me had you written this to another. I wrote that every day it was necessary to keep this in mind, but not more in separating for a week, than separating for an hour, or if more, more in the exact ratio of advanced risk as calculated in accordance with the known and constant laws of life and death. I rarely set

my foot upon a crag without reflecting upon the probabilities of death, nor leave you in a morning walk without an expressed or instinctive prayer that we may meet again in peace. You ask me "why we should continue here" being unprofitable servants. I do not ask, or reason, why, but I know the simple fact that God does preserve men upon earth for His own good purposes, in accordance with a calculable law, that there is such and such a human probability that either you or I shall be taken within a certain time, and that the chance of this probability being violated in either case is just about equal to that of my falling dead at your feet or you at mine, which, while I admit the full possibility of it at any instant, I should consider myself utterly wrong in making a subject of imaginative contemplation.

You say "truly my mouth must have seemed but as the echo of folly in praying that we might be enabled to regard each night as our last." It did so always, for I am fully persuaded as far as of anything that God intends no such thing as such a regard on our part, and I neither desire it nor pray for it. You have confused, by repeated contemplation, two states with each other between which there is the most material difference. You have confused the watching for death with the anticipation of death. Christ says unto all, Watch ; but He never says Anticipate. A sentinel watches, walking to and fro on the parapet, but he anticipates if he fires his musquet and alarms the garrison without cause.

No man—I say it with as much confidence as I dare assert anything except a mathematical fact—ought ever to live as if that day were to be his last. But he ought to spend every day as a thousand years hence he would wish that day to have been spent in the state of his then knowledge of such circumstances as have calculable influence on futurity. Work out the difference in result for these two principles for yourself.

(Four lines are crossed out by Ruskin at this point.)

You have not answered my question respecting him. I did not ask you what you thought of his letter, but of the character

which I sketched of him, the letter being only one part of the evidence to be considered. I was much disappointed at Freeland. The person respecting whom you inquire seems to have been clever and is well informed, but the constant habit of saying what is not felt and of not considering the value of words renders her to any earnest person very oppressive. Her feelings once, I imagine, acute, have withered under a crust of light brittle verbal stalactite which the moment you rest on it crumbles into shapeless powder. I like Lord Ruthven—the rest whom I met were fashions and bubbles except an old quiet Russian countess who did not speak to me.

I love Miss Gray very much, and therefore cannot tell what to think of her, only this I know, that in many respects she is unfit to be my wife unless she also loved me exceedingly. She is surrounded by people who pay her attentions, and though I believe most of them inferior in some points to myself, far more calculated to catch a girl's fancy. Still, Miss Gray and I are old friends. I have every reason to think that if I were to try I could soon make her more than a friend, and if, after I leave her this time, she holds out for six months more, I believe I shall ask her to come to Switzerland with me next year, and if she will not, or if she takes any one else in the meantime, I am sadly afraid I shall enjoy my tour much less than usual, though no disappointment of this kind would affect me as the first did. The relations are good commonplace people. Melville Jameson though unpolished is more than this, and I am not so well cut myself as to have any right to look for undimmed lustre in others. I was not clever enough to get out anything about the coming to Freeland of the person you allude to. I made the less effort because I was so uncomfortable there that I felt I could not return after leaving Bowerswell.

I have not time to write more to-day. Do not think I have written confidently. I write in as few and firm words as I can habitually.

Ever most affectionately and gratefully yours,

J. Ruskin.

I remain here God willing until Friday morning. After that my address will be Denmark Hill.

The next letter is written from the Pavilion Hotel, Folkestone. Ruskin was staying there in the autumn of 1847, ill and depressed. The enclosure to which he refers no doubt had reference to his growing attachment to Miss Gray.

Letter 3.

Pavilion Hotel, Folkestone,
2nd December [1847].

My Dear Macdonald,—I am here solely and entirely to do what I can to put myself to rights, thinking of nothing else, and therefore though I have not for years had so little on my hands—nothing indeed—I hardly ever even write letters, and those I do I scrawl. But scrawling or not I must at last write you and of what I have been about since we parted.

I intended as you know staying in Edinburgh two or three days, but I did not, first because I was tempted to stop in Perth longer than I intended (for cause of which temptation and consequence *vide* enclosed note, after you have done with this), and secondly, because I found it would be as I dreaded there, that I should be pulled to see this and that, and as the fact is that there are few penances to me greater than the seeing of bad pictures, and this penance is not lightened by the concomitant necessity of receiving compliments which you don't believe, and paying others which you don't wish to be believed, hearing and saying the same thing a thousand times, and being bowed out with a great idea of having left the impression of your being a disagreeable coxcomb, because you will not say you are pleased when you are not, and because you are in truth very difficult to please. I say finding all this come upon me at once thick and threefold, I "was obliged to be at Berwick that night," and suffered for my deliverance three penalties, the first that I did not see Mrs. Farquharson, the second that I heard not your good preachers, the third that

I passed a most miserable Sunday at Berwick. I proceeded to Leeds next day, where I stopped a day to see some Turners, and reached home on the 13th, having left of my Perth remittances exactly 10*l.* 10*s.*, of which the ten shillings is spent and the 10*l.* is in the form of a note on the second shelf of my bookcase at home, whence when I get home it will I hope be safely transferred to you.

I had not been long at home when I found nervous excitement returning on me violently, and as my father and mother wanted a little change of air they brought me down here, when finding me better they left me. And now after looking over your letter again to see what it was that I had to say about it more particularly, I believe I have first to thank you for your comment on Mr. Brown's—that physicians have you think done more for humanity than painters, but not for God. This is true and useful. In the second place I have to scold you for your summary dismissal of Mr. Harrison's frivolous letter, or rather of my question about him, which you have never answered to this day. In the third place I have to express some modification of my concurrence in your division of men into Friends or Enemies of God.

I at first thought that Mr. Ford in the *Decapolis* had mathematically proved this line of distinction, that his assertion that the times when if men died they would go to hell or to heaven might be approximated gradually to the point or instance of conversion was true. But there are two objections to be made to this. The first that we know there are degrees of glory and of punishment, but the exact depth or difference between the lightest degree of punishment and the lowest of glory we do not know. They may approximate even closely.

The second, that it cannot be asserted, far less proved, that God does not miraculously uphold and preserve in life, those who are in a progressive condition of conversion, that there may be a long time when men are fit neither for hell nor heaven, and that in that state it is impossible for them to die.

I do not attempt to determine what moral weight either of these objections may properly hold. I only state them as in form, counterpoising Mr. Ford's mathematical proof on the other side. But I think that your positive separation of men into God's friends and enemies would make things anything but straight and clear to me. For instance, there are enemies determined, enemies ignorant, enemies thoughtless, enemies idle, and there are I believe friends also—determined, ignorant, thoughtless, idle, and I am not sure whether an ignorant enemy be not more pardonable in God's sight than an idle friend. I can imagine hosts of such distinctions. That there is one broad distinction between those who love God and who do not, I allow, but I dare not say how nearly a lukewarm love may fall as low in God's sight as an ignorant alienation. Then again, looking into my own heart I find there a definite state of progress. I find the conscience getting more tender, the thoughts more clear and deep, the interest in God's word greater, but I am not sure whether this is in any degree or shadow a spiritual change or a mere growth of the man out of the boy—a natural change.

One thing more, a sadly rude thing, I must say. I do not know what you mean by saying that you were once working with all your might against God, but if so, I do think it would be rash in you to assume that the same kind of feelings were common to all unconverted persons. I do think that there must be many who are lost in sensuality or in selfishness and are in many ways doing the devil's work, and yet who are doing it unconsciously, who suppose themselves to be right, and who if ever converted would not accuse themselves of having wilfully fought against God, but of having wilfully blinded themselves to God.

Your second letter received at Perth I find I have put away at home in mistake. There was something in it also I wished to speak about. Many thanks for it at any rate as it was very kind.

Now read my enclosure privately.

Ever affectionately yours,

J. Ruskin.

Sincere regards to Mrs. Farquharson and your sisters. I trust you are better, write soon and say.

The foregoing letter is of special interest in showing the religious development of Ruskin. It should be remembered that at the time it was written Ruskin had already published the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* (in 1843 and 1846 respectively), but he had written little upon theology. It was not until 1851 in *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds* that Ruskin dealt exclusively with doctrinal and theological questions, and one sees in this latter book some slight trace of his correspondence with his friend four years earlier. But these four years had taken him much further in his general outlook.

Letter 4.

20th February [1848].

Dear Macdonald,—I am truly grateful for your kind, long, interesting, open letter, as also for your invaluable introduction to Sir David Brewster, of whose condescension be assured I shall to the utmost extent in my power avail myself. My father is travelling and will be absent for three weeks or so, but I shall wait upon Sir David as soon as I hear of his arrival in town.

The rest of your letter interested me much ; let me most heartily congratulate you on the recovered health which enabled you to stay so long in Scotland, as well as on the self-denial and prudence to which in some measure that recovery is owing. I am truly rejoiced at your having been strengthened to perform this most arduous duty, and I trust that all may yet be as you would have it ; at all events I feel convinced that even in this world, whatever course events may take will be for your happiness. But you are very good to speak so frankly of the little under motive which most people would

be much ashamed to confess, and which be assured would have great weight with all, even the best. It is not in human nature to free itself from a vanity of this kind, and on the whole I believe it is as well that it should be so. The mind is always most elevated, most secure, most consistent, when in a state of veneration, and I conceive that even this lower kind of respect for rank, as such, is pure, honourable, and useful, as certainly it is most delightful, so long as it does not overstep its proper limits, and lead us to excuse faults, concede duties, or look with contempt on those deprived of such advantage. I should myself fall in love at least twice as fast with a Lady, as with a Miss, but when I was once well in I should of course think my Miss worth two Ladies—so would you. For the rest, an old lady was telling me, but the day before yesterday, that if I was too particular about my wife I should assuredly get a bad one, and pray you don't set your heart upon so high perfection. You know that the desire of excitement, the *besoin d'aimer*, is so strong in the young female heart that it most sincerely for a time opens itself to enthusiastic religious impressions which very often pass away and leave a fatal blank when the real interests of the world sit around them : take care of this choking ; it must be a dreadful thing to see in one whom one loves. You cannot possibly, under ordinary circumstances, see enough of any young person without making direct advances, to enable you to judge assuredly of her character, as it relates to your own, but as it is exhibited to others you can estimate it. I fancy the goodness of the mother ought to be a leading point, and the filial affection and conduct of the daughter. You have seen too much of the world to be caught by the tribe of pseudo-religionists.

I hope we shall soon see you here. I doubt not my being able to indulge myself in a visit to you this summer.

Ever most affectionately yours,

J. Ruskin.

Sincere regards to Mrs. Farquharson and to your good sister, and to yourself from all here.

The next letter (No. 5) is of great literary interest in the fascinating analysis he gives of the correct uses of "shall" and "will," showing that mastery of the English tongue which had contributed to the immediate success of *Modern Painters*. The letter is undated, but was written at the same period as the preceding letters.

Letter 5.

[*Undated.*]

Dear Macdonald,—Best thanks for your long note, in spite of its want of appreciation of all my efforts in your service. I have but one general principle respecting other people's property when it gets into my hands, and that is to send it to them wherever they are as soon as I can unless I am told not. And I conceive this broad principle to work well in the end, and, moreover, it is doing as I would be done by in the strictest sense, for many's the parcel I've waited for in a fever of impatience, while prudent, cold-blooded, insensible, heartless, people like you were "waiting for directions": and few are the parcels which I ever wished to throw at the sender's heads when I got them, as you would yours at mine in comparison, I mean. Only as for the sending per mail, I know nothing of it and I told George to send it by rail by the first train, and moreover as it was entirely owing to my thickheadedness that it was detained at all, I told him to pay the carriage which he couldn't and therefore didn't (not that it matters whether in a general point of view it was your money or mine which was so steamed off), but in a particular point of view it does: so I beg to have my good intentions admitted—and so much good may your tracts do you—and be you thankful. As for my Warwick Street friend believe me, I should not speak nor have spoken as I did respecting any man on ground of manner merely; I have heard every kind of bad manner in the pulpit with pleasure. But there are certain evidences of sincerity and truth which in art and in literature and in oratory cannot be mistaken, and whose total absence leaves every one, I conceive,

at liberty to speak as harshly as they choose. If a man utters a sentence which has nothing in it, and which he knows and must know has nothing in it, with a grimace between every word, and a holding up of his finger and a winking of his eye, and a poke out of his chin in order to make that nothing appear something in the ears of a mob, he is not a preacher but an actor, and in the present case a villainous actor, and though I deny not that many may and do profit by such preaching, more are I believe deceived by it into the taking of phrases for feelings and gestures for arguments, and even those who do profit profit as by the preaching of Judas. I knew a clergyman far less given to pantomime and far quicker in thought and higher in feeling than this man, but of the same class in the main. I as a child thought him a very apostle, and I believe at one time he had real piety, but the habit of falsehood gained on him, he grew dependent on the fancies of his hearers, lost grade and feeling and mind, gradually took to drinking to keep up his gesticulation as clowns take barley water, got into debt, grew swelled and shabby, and died of bottled porter, toasted cheese, and a broken heart.

Touching *shall* and *will*. I fancy that practice and a little attention are the only means of vanquishing their niceties altogether, but yet as far as regards the use of them with the first person, I or we—shall or will—the law seems to me tolerably simple, and to have a pretty sense of piety in it almost peculiar to the English language. In the first and broad use of *shall* it is evidently an *imperative* with respect to its nominative. "You *shall* do it." "Thou *shalt*" (in the Commandments). Therefore, when the nominative is the first person *shall* is applied to every act which is compulsory or imperative upon that nominative and to every act therefore which is independent of our volition.

"I shall be upset." "I shall be drowned." "I shall fall." "I shall fall in love." "I shall be angry" (the spirit of the language considering that anger and other passions are necessities. I don't know about this in philosophy but it

is so in grammar). Therefore when you speak of ruining me in stamps, as you don't wish to do so, but can't help it (which is a great pity) you must say *shall*, and with respect to receiving me with pleasure at Xmount, as your pathos of pleasure is in compliment to me to be supposed necessary, you must say "I shall be glad." Now the nicety and what I feel to be the pretty piety of the usage of the language is in the point to which this independence of our volition is carried. For the "shall" is peculiarly said of actions which are supposed to be in measure out of our power—and in God's—with whom all *shalls* finally rest, and therefore it has an applied subjunctive sense, in cases when *will* might be used instead of it.

"I shall (probably) go to Crossmount this summer"; and observe if the *probably* be expressed that *shall* must be used.

"I will (probably) go" is wrong, so that whenever you use *shall* you imply a subjunctive with respect to yourself, and an imperative dependent on God. "I shall be there (I believe)." "I shall drive this afternoon (I think)." So then *will*, used after the first person, is left for an expression of personal determination. "Pray do it." "Yes, I will." "Come to Xmount if you can." "I will"—where *shall* would be grossly wrong. And even when the volition is compulsory, as a servant receiving orders "I will do so, Sir," not "I shall." And of course in still stronger necessity, for the expression of the French *je veux*. In some cases the *shall* nearly takes the place of *will*. "Will/do you go by sea or land?" "I *shall* go by sea": but *will* never takes place of *shall*.

"I will be at Crossmount this summer" would imply determination, and could only be said gracefully when such was intended to be expressed. A resultant nicety is that, of continuance of action, which is supposed less in our power than immediate action, and of far future as opposed to immediate action *shall* is necessary. "I will be at Crossmount" or "I will come" may be said, but "I shall be there some weeks." "I shall stay, remain," better than "I will stay."

With respect to the second and third persons, *shall* being

imperatives leaves *will* for the simple future and for the expression of volition. "Friend, if thou dost use ill language, thou shalt be knocked down"—imperative. "Friend, if thou standest in the way, thou *wilt* be knocked down"—simple future. "Friend, thou wilt not knock me down?" Inquiry into sentiment or volition. So *will* is left in general for simple futures in second and third person. When I say of you that "He never knows one day where he *will* go or what he *will* do the next," *shall* would be very wrong. But another pretty thing is that owing to the use of *shall* as imperative in Scripture, it becomes prophetic as of predetermined events in the second and third person. "Ye shall know that I am," etc. "They shall perish, but thou," etc., and from this use it slides into almost a simple future. "Ye know not whether shall prosper, whether this or that," where *will* might be used, but less elegantly.

I won't beg your pardon for all this, for it amuses me to write it and it may amuse you to read it, and if it didn't I hope you haven't.

Yours affectionately,
J. Ruskin.

There is now a long gap in the correspondence, the next letter being written after the death of Ruskin's father in 1864.

Letter 6.

9th March [1864].

My Dear Macdonald,—I would have written to you long before now if I had known where to find you, but I can't throw away letters just now, and I have always a vague notion of your being in seven or eight places at once, which keeps me from writing to any.

The death was sudden—and not sudden. My father read me two superb letters on business on Saturday evening—no, Sunday morning, the 27th February, at half-past one, to my intense disgust, for I was dog-tired, having been out at dinner

and detained by long and curious talk afterwards; however, having long experience in practical lying I managed to make him think I enjoyed one of them. The other, I'm sorry to say I got drowsy over, which he seeing, got up and bade me goodnight. He came down on Sunday morning evidently so much not himself that I said to him, "O father, let me bring down my things out of the study and sit beside you this morning in case you want anything, for you ought not to run about as you do usually." This he assented to at once, which frightened me, for he was usually very tiresome and obstinate in such things, and wouldn't be looked after; however, I brought down a coin of Arethusa (which I've lost by the way, but it was only an electrotype luckily) and began drawing it. Presently I wanted a softer pencil and ran up to fetch one. I heard my father follow me upstairs, go into his room, and lock the door.. He stayed longer than usual—and so on. He never spoke a rational word more, but he took till Thursday in dying slowly and (the doctors say) very curiously. One thing struck me, to all intents and purposes he was dead on Wednesday evening, but his heart went on beating under my hand till Thursday morning at half-past eleven, the breath continuing by sheer force of the circulation, and stopping for two hours before the last for seven and ten seconds at a time, and then beginning again with a gasp. This six or seven times over, while the heart held its own pace all the while.

One felt that it might have had a good deal more happiness in its time if one had known how to get at it rightly, which is one of those precious pieces of information which you religious people value so highly, because you get them just when they're of no use.

My mother stood it marvellously. Her blindness helped her, for she could not see the face, and so, not only was spared much, but even had not lost hope even to the last moment, so that she astonished me out of my wits (nearly) by a sharp burst of sorrow when I told her the breath returned not, though I knew he had been dead all night. But she recovered

herself, and has behaved in the sweetest, wisest way ever woman did ever since, and I think she's past all immediate danger now. Those accursed upholsterers are going to have their piece of dramatic performance to-morrow, but she'll be kept out of sight and hearing except of the wheels on the gravel which I can't help. Venice must have been good for that sort of thing. I never felt how convenient before, live and learn—you say "die and learn" I suppose.

I usually envy you your beliefs considerably, just now I had rather have mine, by a great deal, but I wish you joy of them always. We shall like seeing you when you come to town. You were much more wrong in saying I could drop you without concern than I in saying you would correct my flatterers. I did but jest in saying that, for you always say things that would be flattery of great strength only that they are sincere.

Ever affectionately yours,

J. Ruskin.

The only other letter describing the death of his father, which has been published, is one which Ruskin wrote on the 7th of March 1864, but the letter to Macdonald contains a number of details omitted from the former. Ruskin's mother died seven years later, in 1871.

The foregoing letters are all intimate and personal. But they are something more. They are the revelation of Ruskin the man, and it is a revelation consistent with the character of Ruskin the writer and prophet.

RUSKIN AND LONDON

BY

J. H. WHITEHOUSE

RUSKIN AND LONDON

RUSKIN all his life had an intimate connection with London. He was born in London. His early years and much of his later life were largely spent in London. *Modern Painters* and a great number of his other books were written at his London homes. It was the scene of many of his practical experiments in education and social reform. It was the home of many of his closest friends. He knew it in all its aspects. Its architecture, its history, its possessions, its social conditions, are all matters with which he has dealt in a hundred books. On all these subjects he expressed himself with a great vigour and candour, and the only consolation which a Londoner feels in reading these criticisms is that they do not come from a stranger to London but from one of themselves.

London Architecture

Ruskin's teaching on art and beauty was constantly illustrated by references to the architecture of London buildings. He rarely had anything good to say of modern London, and most of his references to particular buildings were condemnatory. All his lessons on ugliness, bad taste, false art, were enforced by appeals to these things in the streets of London. The building in which the political wisdom of the nation is believed to find its highest expression was particularly offensive to Ruskin. The present Houses of Parliament were built in 1840 from designs by Sir Charles Barry. The design was adopted in 1836, and although Ruskin was then a mere boy, he at once described it as vile. In 1854, in a public letter, he described the Houses as the most effeminate

and effectless heap of stones ever raised by man. In 1873 there is a fine outburst. He quotes from a book called *The Young Mechanic's Instructor* a passage indulging in lyrical praise of the Houses of Parliament. *The Young Mechanic's Instructor* thought that after generations would say : "Surely our forefathers were great and illustrious men, that they had reached the climax of human skill so that we cannot improve on their superb and princely buildings." Ruskin thought this characteristic of the sort of mind unexampled for its conceit, hypocrisy and ignorance which modern art teaching centralized by Kensington produces in our workmen. It is not surprising, therefore, that he wished to destroy and rebuild the Houses of Parliament. In this respect they fared better than the new town of Edinburgh and the city of New York. These he wished to destroy without rebuilding.

There is much in Ruskin's criticism of these buildings which is just. There are, however, some features of the buildings to the merits of which he was, I think, insensible. Whatever the faults of the buildings in detail, they are not without a real dignity as a whole. This dignity can perhaps best be realized by the view of the Houses of Parliament which is obtained from the south of the river. From this position, too, the various towers present an effective picture against the sky. The decorations of the buildings are in some respects even worse than Ruskin described them. Any one who studies the façade of the Houses from the Terrace will see that the details of the building are wholly lacking in the Gothic spirit. The same symbols and ornaments are repeated at intervals with machine-like precision, a matter which in itself goes far to justify Ruskin's criticism that it had been built in Gothic without knowing how. In a letter which Ruskin wrote in 1854 he spoke of the inscriptions on the Houses of Parliament. They were illegible and utterly unfit for their position. Few would dispute Ruskin's criticism on these and similar details of the Houses of Parliament. One long illegible inscription runs along the whole of the façade above the terrace. I have

myself often shown it to visitors and invited them to decipher it. From long experience I grew to know that I should have one of two answers. I should be told it was either the Lord's Prayer or the Ten Commandments. These answers arose, I suppose, from some vague feeling that these would be the appropriate inscriptions for a Parliamentary building. In reality, however, the inscription is a list of the Kings and Queens of England, information which is readily obtainable from the conventional text-books of history provided for use in schools.

The other official buildings in London equally excited Ruskin's condemnation. In the years 1857–8–9 there took place what is known as the Battle of the Styles. In 1856 there had been held a public competition for new Government offices. The designs sent in were exhibited, and something approaching popular interest had been aroused in them. Sir Gilbert Scott's design was chosen for the India Office, which was to be one of the new Government Offices. It was a Gothic design and was approved by Ruskin. Before, however, the building was begun, Lord Derby, the Prime Minister, who had approved the design, was succeeded by Palmerston, who insisted upon the Gothic design being changed to Italian. "Why should we build in this style?" he is reported to have said, speaking of Sir Gilbert Scott's Gothic. "Our ancestors knew no better." Perhaps Palmerston was right, for a Gothic building meant study, contemplation, creative work. What does a Government Department know of such things? When the change was made, Ruskin expressed the view that it did not really matter, as nobody knew which was which and nobody could build either. He suggested that Sir Gilbert Scott should build Lord Palmerston an office with all the capitals upside down and tell him it was in the Greek style, inverted to express Government by party—up to-day, down to-morrow.

Those who are interested in the example which the Government sets to the builders of London will find it

profitable to follow in some detail Ruskin's criticisms of our public buildings. I have great sympathy with the newspaper which, when recording the death of Ruskin, described him as the author of the *Seven "Lumps" of Architecture*, and with the editor who added a note after this statement to the effect that "our readers will be familiar with these buildings in Whitehall," for the modern Government buildings are extremely depressing. They are themselves an example of a style originally vicious having become standardized through the existence of an office of works with a staff who are compelled to work on bad conventional lines. It does not require specialized knowledge of architecture to be able to condemn on intelligent grounds the official buildings of Whitehall. I do not speak of the waste of space and the inconvenience which mark many of the interiors, but let the reader consider the matter from the standpoint of simplicity and beauty alone. Most of the features of many of the exteriors of the Government buildings in Whitehall must then be condemned. Let me instance a few by way of illustration: the deep grooves surrounding each block of stone: Ruskin has described them as heavy ledger lines. They are receptacles for dirt, but apart from this they destroy any beauty the façade might have. They direct the eye to the right and to the left, and wholly destroy any feeling of repose and dignity. The reader can test this matter for himself. After studying one of these buildings with deep lines around each stone, let him look at a building with a wholly flat stone surface, such as Westminster Hall, or even the new building of the Middlesex Guildhall, and he will then realize what difference a detail of this kind means.

Another feature is the treatment of the stones at the base of most of the modern Government buildings. The surface of these stones has been mechanically drilled or chiselled in order to give an appearance of natural roughness. But the effect is most mechanical and unnatural, and the only result is to produce a very insanitary wall.

Another example of official taste is the new War Office in Whitehall, perhaps the most hideous of any of our public buildings. Look at its heavily recessed windows, through which the light has difficulty in getting. Look at the barbarous architecture of the main entrance with its supremely ugly blocks of stone. Look again at the meaningless towers that decorate the roof. Perhaps, however, the builders built more suitably than they realized.

Social Conditions

Ruskin naturally had much to say about the planning of London as a whole, and about its vast areas of slumland. It was to him a vast squirrel's cage, fed from the outside, and he speaks of the ghastly spaces of the southern suburbs, Vauxhall, Lambeth, Wapping, Bermondsey. The slums were, he held, created by the rich squirrels, and he inquires when they die in the Lord what works will follow them. One of his best satirical passages follows :—

" Lugubrious march of the Waterloo Road, and the Borough and St. Giles'. The shadows of all the Seven Dials having fetched their last compass, new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride, of course, opening her gates to them, attendant Old Jewry outside. Their works do follow them, for these streets are indeed what they have built, their inhabitants the people they have chosen to educate. They took the bread and milk and meat from the people of their fields. They gave it to feed and to retain here in their service this fermenting mass of unhappy human beings, newsmongers, novel-mongers, picture-mongers, poisoned drink-mongers, lust and death mongers, the whole accumulating mass of it one vast dead marine store-shop accumulation of wreck of the Dead Sea with every activity in it, a form of putrefaction."

Side by side with this quotation another may fitly be given. After quoting the conventional excuse, " We are sorry but

what can we do? How can we help it? London is so big and living is so very expensive, you know," Ruskin replies:

"Miserables, who made London big but you, coming to look at the harlotries in it, painted and other? Who makes living expensive but you who drink and eat and dress all you can and never in your lives did one stroke of work to get your living, never drew a bucket of water, never sowed a grain of corn, never spun a yard of thread, but you devour and steal and waste to your fill and think yourselves good and fine and better creatures of God, I doubt not, than the poor starved wretch of a shoemaker who shod whom he could while you gave him food enough to keep him in strength to stitch."

The Suburbs of London

The suburbs of London filled Ruskin both with despair and with fury. This was not only caused by their architecture and their houses, but by the attitude of mind of the people who lived in them. "The increasing London or Liverpool respectable suburb," he said, "is simply provided with its baker's and butcher's shop, its alehouse, its itinerant organ-grinders for the week and stationary organ-grinder for Sunday, himself his monkey in obedience to the commonest condition of demand and supply, and without much more danger in their Sunday's entertainment than in their Saturday's." He saw in the Church no effective agency to redeem the wickedness of London. He describes a visit to a London suburban church. "It was built of bad Gothic, lighted with bad painted glass, and had its litany intoned and its sermon delivered on the subject of wheat and chaff by a young man of, as far as I could judge, very sincere religious sentiments, but very certainly the kind of person whom one might have brayed in a mortar with a pestle without making his foolishness depart from him." He added, however, "It was not by men of this stamp that the principal mischief is done to the Church of Christ, for their foolish congregations were not enough in earnest even to be misled."

Practical Experiments

Ruskin made at least three practical attempts in connection with London to reform social conditions. The first was in 1867 in connection with slum property. He was himself the owner of a number of tenements in the Marylebone district. He had inherited these under his father's will. The care of all these properties he entrusted to Miss Octavia Hill. She undertook to manage them on the basis of personal service and responsibility. The rents were to be strictly moderate, and after returning a small percentage to the owner the income was to be wholly spent in improving the condition of the property and of the tenant. This experiment had a great influence. Its success was, of course, largely due to the devoted character of Miss Octavia Hill. Under her care the experiment developed in many directions and led to a new spirit of responsibility on the part of many owners of property. It gave a great impetus to the general cause of housing reform.

Another London experiment was with regard to the physical condition of the streets. Ruskin was greatly impressed by the filthy conditions which existed in the streets in Seven Dials, and in 1872 he obtained permission from the Local Board to employ at his own expense a number of sweepers. The sweepers included his gardener and a young shoeblack. Ruskin himself appears to have used the broom to encourage his followers. The experiment was preceded by the following letter to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* on December 28, 1871 :—

"Sir,—

"I have been every day on the point of writing to you since your notice on the 18th of the dirty state of the London streets to ask whether any of your readers would care to know how such things are managed in my neighbourhood. I was obliged a few years ago for the benefit of my health to take a small house in one of the country towns of Utopia. Though

I was at first disappointed in the climate, which indeed is no better than our own except that there is no foul marsh air, I found my cheerfulness and ability for work greatly increased by the mere power of getting exercise pleasantly close to my door even in the worst of the winter, when, though I have a little garden at the back of my house I dislike going into it because the things look all so dead, and find my walk on the whole pleasanter in the streets, these being always perfectly clean and the wood-carvings of the houses prettier than much of our indoor furniture.

"But it was about the streets I wanted to tell you. The Utopians have the oddest way of carrying out things when once they begin as far as they can go. And it occurred to them one dirty December long since when they, like us, had only crossing-sweepers, that they might just as well sweep the whole of the street as the crossings of it, so that they might cross anywhere. Of course that meant more work for the sweepers, but the Utopians have always hands enough for whatever work is to be done in the open air. They appointed a due number of broomsmen to every quarter of the town, and since then at any time of the year it is in our little town as in great Rotterdam when Dr. Brown saw it on his journey from Norwich to Colen in 1668, 'the women go about in white slippers; it is pretty to see.'

"Now, Sir, it would of course be more difficult to manage anything like this in London, because for one thing in our town we have a rivulet running down every street that slopes to the river, and besides because you have coal dust and smoke and what not to deal with, and the habit of spitting, which is worst of all. In Utopia a man would as soon vomit as spit in the street, or anywhere else indeed if he could help it. But still it is certain we can at least anywhere do as much for the whole street as we have done for the crossing, and to show that we can I mean on the 1st January next to take three street-sweepers into constant service. They will be the first workpeople I employ with the interest of the St. George's Fund, of which

I shall get my first dividend this January. And whenever I can get leave from the police and inhabitants I will keep my three sweepers steadily at work for eight hours a day, and I hope soon to show you a bit of our London streets kept as clean as the deck of a ship of the line.

"I am, Sir,

"Your faithful servant,

"JOHN RUSKIN."

The experiment did not last very long. There was trouble with the sweepers, but it had a considerable influence whilst it lasted. Ruskin took many friends to examine its possibilities.

Another practical experiment connected with London was his establishment of a retail shop for the sale of tea. This took place in 1874. The shop was called Mr. Ruskin's Tea Shop, the signboard being painted by Mr. Arthur Severn. Two of his mother's old servants were installed in the shop, and it was carried on for a couple of years. Ruskin intended in this shop to be faithful to two principles, which he regarded as essential: the tea was to be pure—there was to be no adulteration of any kind; and the buyers were to be protected against profiteering. However small the quantity of tea bought by the consumer, the rate was to be the same as for larger quantities.

These experiments, whether long or short lived, were all of great value to Ruskin himself. They gave him experience and they enabled him to develop on sound lines many of his social theories. They gave reality to his teaching. They are only three out of a great number of other experiments, though others were not so closely connected with London. The best tribute Ruskin could offer to the sincerity of his own teaching was in the fact that he was ready to expend all his resources in the practical realization of the plans he urged in his books.

SOME MEMORIES OF RUSKIN

BY
HENRY W. NEVINSON

SOME MEMORIES OF RUSKIN

I TOO once sat in Christ Church choir, and came under the influence of that cathedral which, in the Oxford chapter of *Præterita* Ruskin has called "an epitome of English history." We Junior Students, as the "Scholars" of the House were then called, were ranged facing each other on each side of the approach to the altar, looking up to the Tudor roof and down upon a pavement decorated with symbolic mosaics of Temperantia, Justitia, Fortitudo, and other virtues distinctive of men and women. Up that pavement, at all events on Sundays when we were all dressed in white surplices like the angels, a strange figure used to pass and seat himself in a stall behind the row of us on the north side. Through some accident, or because it gave a better view of Norman arches and St. Frideswide's chapel, I always sat on the south side myself, and so could contemplate that strange figure at leisure—the mass of tawny hair, carefully brushed in order; the bright grey, nearly blue, eyes, usually quiet and meditative under tawny and projecting eyebrows; the eagle nose, the long and sensitive mouth, and rather receding chin; the whole face thin, well wrinkled and clean-shaven; the bright blue necktie wound two or three times about an upstanding collar, not hanging down over the shirt-front, but apparently fastened by some invisible pin; the head inclined a little to the right, owing to a draughtsman's habit of raising the left shoulder; the loose and unfashionable clothes partly concealed by the long black gown; the whole bearing shy, and showing just a touch of the ordinary Don's self-conscious and apologetic manner, as much as to say "I know I'm distinguished, but please not to condemn me unheard, for I really cannot help it!"

Certainly, I did not condemn, but for a time I remained indifferent and slightly contemptuous, having been brought up in a beautiful and barbaric school, knowing nothing and caring nothing about the human race since it left off writing good Greek, three centuries before the birth of Christ. In sheer perversity I missed some of the Slade Professor's lectures, because I thought art an effeminate sort of thing, and was bound to the galleys on the river. But having learnt the management of every kind of boat and every state of river-water, I turned to racquets as another branch of University education, and so found time to put in a lecture of an afternoon, if I felt disposed. Persuaded by a friend scornfully known as an "æsthete" (for love of beauty was then attracting more than the usual derision), I agreed to "do a Ruskin" one day, and so came at once and permanently under the enchantment of that magic personality.

The charm of those Oxford lectures has been described by many writers, admirably, among others, by Sir Edward Cook in vol. ii. chapter x. of his *Life of Ruskin*. They were held in the theatre of the Parks Museum, because there was no other place big enough for the crowding audience, and even there many of us had to stand, filling the doors and passages. Women were admitted, though Ruskin tried to limit their numbers, since his office was to call male undergraduates to repentance. His entrance was always greeted with an outburst of applause, and applause or laughter broke in upon the lecture from time to time. "Why applaud? We never applaud other Professors," a scholar next to me once grumbled, and I could only reply, "We have no need to."

Forty years have gone, but I can still see that shyly conspicuous figure entering from the left-hand door, softly, rather deprecatingly under the applause, glancing at the row of drawings—usually Turner's or his own—arranged to illustrate the lecture, and then turning to face us with those blue and meditative eyes. Others have written of the singular and penetrating voice, holding the theatre spellbound far

beyond the appointed hour. Mr. Mallock wrote at the time, "There was something strange and aerial in its exquisite modulations that seemed as if it came from a disconsolate spirit, hovering over the waters of Babylon and remembering Zion." That is true in part, though upon myself the humour, irony and gleaming satire both of voice and words made most impression. Yet there was in the man a penetrating vision, a depth of thought and passion of indignation, which raised his lectures far above the religious height of the most solemn service I have ever heard, and once when recalling them to memory twenty years ago, I truly wrote :—

"I well remember how in the last lecture of one course he so overwhelmed us with solemn awe, that when he closed his book no one moved or spoke. We sat there absolutely silent. We no more thought of the usual thunder of applause than we should have thought of clapping an angel's song that makes the heavens be mute" (*Daily Chronicle*, February 8, 1899).

After a few seconds, Ruskin looked up as though surprised at the unusual silence. Then he turned to the drawings, made a few casual remarks about them, bringing us back to this present world, and disappeared. The applause broke like a storm.

Having "gone down," I did not hear the final courses, in which signs of haste, over-excitement and mental perturbation were evident. We heard of "storms," violent but sharply defined as thunder-clouds, sweeping over the brain, and we supposed the work of a great life was finished. Nevertheless, from time to time, the chapters of *Præterita* appeared, betraying no change or decline, except perhaps in the absence of savage indignation. After reading the chapter called "L'Hôtel du Mont Blanc," I determined some day to revisit those scenes, where, in fact, I had already wandered as an ignorant boy, walking in the dawn and evening, and sleeping out at night in the bitter cold of the pine-woods. An opportunity came in the late summer of 1888, and again I

walked through Bonneville and Maglan up the lovely Val de Cluse, where they were just beginning to lay the present railway to Chamounix. In the little village of St. Martin, the "Hôtel du Mont Blanc," being on the old road where the diligences no longer passed, had fallen into decay, and the landlady refused to take me in, for fear I might "ennuyer" myself. So I crossed the Arve by the single-spanned bridge (restored in 1784, but keeping the date of 1603 nearly obliterated on the Savoy arms) which Ruskin describes in the chapter, and stayed in Sallenches at the "Hôtel de Belle Vue," an old building of solid stone with deep windows, still prospering in those days upon the tourists who stopped for dinner there upon their dashing course from Geneva to Chamounix. It was the noblest inn I have known.

Some French foresters came to the evening meals and an occasional bagman, but the only other Englishman was one whom I described in my diary as "evidently a confidential servant or valet to a Byronic young gentleman who occupies private rooms on the first floor, and parades at rare intervals with an easel. Perhaps he is a lord; perhaps insane." The impression of insanity was increased by the habits of some one in the next bedroom to mine who used to wake me up by creaking about the floor at the first ray of morning. Certainly, the view of the whole Mont Blanc range with its aiguilles, clear from end to end, was most beautiful about an hour before sunrise, but I cursed him all the same, and in my diary I continued to describe the valet as "the keeper"—all the more, perhaps, because in conversation I found that he had travelled in Venice, Domo d'Ossola and other beautiful places.

One evening we talked about fishing, and he said that though the Arve looks so thick, fish could live in it because the deposit is only clean and healthy slate or lime (this was, of course, before the poisonous cyanide of potassium mills were built at the entrance to the Vale of Chamounix). Then, as melodramatists say, my suspicions were aroused. I spoke of the corrupted rivers in Yorkshire and Scotland, and so

turned to Dumfries and Carlyle's country, which I knew. The valet told me he had held Carlyle's cup while he drank tea, so feeble had the old man become, and I said I wondered what Carlyle's friends—"such as Ruskin"—thought of Froude's Biography, over which controversy then raged. "I'm afraid," I added, "that Ruskin will be the next to go." "I've never known him so well for years," the amazing valet replied; "Haven't you seen him?" "Very often in old days," I said. "I mean here—now," he answered. "I am with him here."

In my diary I wrote, "I was much bewildered and overcome, nor remember what more was said. We talked a bit about Cockerell and Ruskin's books and some indifferent matters, but I was really struck into silence." Next morning, when wakened again by the creaking of those noisy boots, I did not utter a single damn.

It was September 12, 1888. The previous day Ruskin had written :—

SALLENCHES, 11*th September*.

"You can't think the joy it is to me being at this old inn —and to-day it was, for the first time, fine like old times, and I've been up far among the granite boulders of the torrent, breaking stones in my old way. Life given back to me. And the stone-crop, and the ragged-robin, on the granite among the moss" (*The Life of Ruskin*, II. p. 526).

As I returned to the inn before noon from drawing the old Arve bridge, I saw Ruskin looking at me from the bedroom window next to mine. Mrs. Nevinson sent him a lot of cyclamen which I had gathered on a distant mountain side, and Baxter, that faithful servant, led us up, at "the Professor's" request, to the little "salon" on the first floor. Scattered sentences in my diary read :—

"He came to meet us with words of thanks, a little bit *empressés*; I mean there was something almost religiously

solemn in his thanks, as though we were in Church or at a deathbed—eyes turned down and voice subdued.[1] But he recovered himself at once, and I noticed it again only for a moment as we came away. He looked much older than in Oxford ten years ago ; has grown a beard, tawny where it is not grey, longish but worn into an irregular peak by the inclination of the head to the right, the left shoulder being now noticeably higher than the other, giving the whole figure a stooping, and even sloughing appearance. The eyes are set deep under shaggy, light brown eyebrows, and are greyish-keen, looking quietly into your face, without hesitation or self-consciousness. They are surrounded by multitudes of tiny wrinkles ; otherwise, there is not, at first sight, much humour in the face. The nose is hooked, though not quite so much as in the photographs, which otherwise are exactly like him. His hands, as one might suppose, are long, thin, delicate, with loose, soft skin in wrinkles of age—just a thought too soft, perhaps. He wore a longish black coat, large, loose grey waistcoat, and grey trousers. The youth I had taken for a lord or a lunatic was present—Detmar Blow, an architect, introduced apparently by Cockerell : 'He came for me to lean upon,' Ruskin said."

We were looking across the fertile valley to the great red precipices of Varens, which rose sheer opposite the window, and he said there was no place like Sallenches for beauty and sublimity combined.

"And yet," I said, "hardly a soul comes here to stay." "Very few people have souls," he answered, "and those that have are generally ambitious and want to climb up heights. Hardly any one cares about beauty. If people did, they wouldn't build London or pull down Paris."

He paused, and as though to correct exaggeration, then went on : "There are, of course, good people still, but they

[1] This was mere politeness, to conceal a great man's natural boredom at the admiration of unknown people !

spend all their time in undoing the harm that the others have done. They go nursing, or reforming the East End, or teaching *cretins*, while the healthy and hopeful are neglected. The other day there was a woman singing here about the street with a lovely voice. But her only song was all about 'Liberté, Liberté!' and that sort of thing. I asked her what she knew of Liberty, and tried to get her to sing some of the other songs in the book she was selling, such as 'La Rosière,' [1] but found she didn't know any, and couldn't read."

I said something about the melancholy of the mountain people.

"Yes," he answered, "the people here are gloomy, and no wonder. They are neglected and left to themselves, and not allowed to see or hear anything. There are no gentry in the country; they have all swarmed into the towns to make money. The peasants have a very hard time, especially in such seasons as this, and now that there is so much disease among the vines."

He became a little depressed, and continued in tones more subdued and regretful. "The country does not grow what it used to. The whole climate" (I think he meant of Europe) "is becoming damper, and I only wish God would provide us with better means of resisting it. The snow on Mont Blanc is not so deep as it used to be. It comes lower down the sides, but is thin, and the top is growing bare."

"Yesterday," he continued more cheerfully, "we were on the road out there (towards Combloux and Megève) and saw the great moraine that once came from Mont Blanc and extended to Geneva and the Jura. As it receded, it left the greatest blocks just there by the Combloux road. We measured some."

He appealed to Detmar Blow for the exact sizes, which were given. He then described the vegetation—"very rich,

[1] I.e., the winner of the rose given to the best-behaved girl in a village. Not to be confused with the English song "The Rosary" then still uncreated.

as it always is on granite"—and went on to speak of various friends, such as Sidney Cockerell, who had been with him at Abbeville shortly before—"a very remarkable young man, so sweet and thoughtful, and of high scientific power too. If he had been here, he would have filled the whole place with shells by now."

"Yes," he said again, as though aroused from despondency by the thought of friends, "there are still good people in the world, though they generally overwork—or overwalk themselves. And so yesterday you walked up to the Col de Voza and back—a long way. I wish I could walk as far now. By walking you can get to places where no carriage or mule can take you. That's the best of it."

He went on to speak of St. Martin—"not much changed since his boyhood; even the inn capable of repair"—and of various other subjects. We took leave, he again displaying an almost deferential politeness, and that afternoon the slight and stooping figure entered a carriage with Detmar Blow, and drove across to St. Martin so as to follow the old and beautiful road to Chamounix.

There, a day or two later (September 16, 1888), he wrote the Epilogue to the complete edition of *Modern Painters*, concluding with the paragraph :—

"All that is involved in these passionate utterances of my youth was first expanded and then concentrated into the aphorism given twenty years afterwards in my inaugural Oxford lectures: 'All great Art is Praise'; and on that aphorism, the yet bolder saying founded, 'So far from Art being immoral, in the ultimate power of it, nothing but Art is moral; Life without Industry is sin, and Industry without Art, brutality' (I forget the words, but that is their purport): and now, in writing beneath the cloudless peace of the snows of Chamouni, what must be the really final words of the book which their beauty inspired and their strength guided. I am able, with yet happier and calmer heart than ever heretofore,

to enforce its simplest assurance of faith, that the knowledge of what is beautiful leads on, and is the first step, to the knowledge of the things which are lovely and of good report ; and that the laws, the life and the joy of beauty in the material world of God, are as eternal and sacred parts of His creation as, in the world of spirits, Virtue ; and in the world of angels, Praise."

"Life given back to me," he wrote at Sallenches. "With yet happier and calmer heart than ever heretofore," he wrote that day in Chamounix. Yet those days were to be the last of full life for him, and those sentences the last written words full of his power, though he remained in the world for nearly twelve years longer, nominally alive.

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